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D I B D I N ' S

HISTORY

OF THE

STAGE.

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A  
COMPLETE HISTORY  
OF THE  
STAGE.

WRITTEN BY  
MR. DIBDIN.

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THE PLAYERS CANNOT KEEP COUNSEL: THEY'LL TELL ALL.

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VOL. IV.

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THE  
STAGE.

## BOOK V.

FROM THE DEATH OF JAMES TO THE RE-  
VOLUTION.

## CHAP I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE STAGE TO THE RE-  
STORATION.

As, in order to keep the life of every separate poet within the reader's view, I have found it impossible to avoid going in some instances beyond the death of JAMES, so upon the same principle I have kept back several authors who might with great propriety have been mentioned, had it not appeared necessary that their whole writings should also be seen and examined together.

Another reason for my adoption of this conduct

is that, though, as we come forward, it would be naturally expected that facts and circumstances should wear a most decided and defined aspect, the impossibility of this happens to be apparent; for the troubles of CHARLES, the first, so involved in doubt and uncertainty many particulars relative to the theatre, that the early plays of SHAKESPEARE, BACCHUS, and others, could not possibly bear the dates we see affixed to them, and for the simple reason that actors and playhouses were at those times prohibited.

We know that CHARLES the first, who was taught music by COPERNICO, and dancing at the particular request of his father, was very fond of dramatic amusements; but these were generally masques; for plays dwindled after the death of SHAKESPEARE, which has been proved by the variety of enemies JONSON conjured up, most of which attacked him successfully; but by the time FRYNNE, the COLLIER of his day, came to publish his strictures, which, though he was a sacrifice, served the cause of the Puritans, the interest of the theatre was very materially shaken, and this was in 1633.

These facts admitted, no man in his senses, and with a correct knowledge of the subject, can venture to assert that from the death of JONSON even to the

Restoration, many novelties, at least of a regular and meritorious kind, could possibly have been brought out; but, when you see the titles of plays that bear date all the way from the calling of the long parliament to the abdication of RICHARD CROMWELL, nothing can be so absurd as to believe that they were then produced; for during the troubles, not only the theatres were shut up but the actors were nobly acting their parts, and that in most honourable situations, by defending their king in the field of battle; in which duty they acquitted themselves with so much spirit, courage, and loyalty, that but one malcontent appeared among them, and he, having seceded only from religious motives, took no active part on either side. His name was SWANSTON.

As we hear nothing at this time of BURBAGE, HEMMINGES, and CONDELL, they had probably retired from this earthly stage, for LOWIN, TAYLER, and POLLARD, were so old that, though they fervently gave the king their sincerest good wishes, they had nothing better to offer for his service. It was, however, different with those who had strength and were young enough to manifest their more active duty.

MOHUN had first a company and afterwards a

- majority; HART had a troop of horse in Prince RUPERT's regiment, under sir THOMAS DALLISON; BURT was a cornet in the same troop, and SHATTERSEL a quarter master; ALLEN, of the Cockpit, was a major and quarter master general, and ROBINSON, who had some important commission, was killed by that HARRISON who was hanged afterwards at Charing Cross, and who surprized and surrounded ROBINSON with a strong party, which it was impossible for him to cope with, and butchered him after he had lain down his arms, crying out, "Curfed be he that doeth the work of the LORD negligently."

So many others nobly fell in the cause of their sovereign that not more than enough to furnish up a tolerable company remained after the troubles, though LOWIN, TAYLER, and POLLARD, old as they were, made a part of it. These were obliged to perform by stealth; and, though they contrived by some means to get possession of the Cockpit, they were not only obliged to invite their audiences with the greatest privacy, but even to be cautious of whom those audiences were composed.

Further to set this clear, in October, 1647, and in February, 1648, ordinances were issued from the long parliament, in which "all stage plays and in-

“terludes were absolutely forbid. Stages, seats,  
“and galleries were ordered to be pulled down,  
“and all players, though calling themselves the  
“king’s or queen’s servants, to be punished as  
“rogues and vagabonds; the money received at  
“the doors to go to the poor of the parish, and  
“every spectator to pay five shillings also for the  
“use of the poor.”

The consequence of being driven to this necessity is obvious. After being undisturbed for a very short time, information was given against them; and, as they were performing *The Bloody Brother*, in which LOWIN acted Aubrey, TAYLER Rollo, POLLARD the cook, BURT Latorch, and HART Otto, a party of soldiers surprized them in the middle of the play and carried them off, habits and all, to Hatton House, from whence, after keeping them some time, they stript them and let them loose again.

After this a few noblemen, who were not unmindful of their merit and services, invited these poor forsaken wretches to perform at their houses, and Holland House at Kenfington, in particular was now and then fitted up for their reception. The actors, however, and their audiences were



obliged to be a little cautious, for both their profession and their principles were of course obnoxious to OLIVER and his party.

Thus situated they were obliged to keep a good look out; and GOFFE, who used to perform the female parts, and who had a very skilful and animating address, not only used to plead their cause to their patrons and excite them to relieve their distress, but he bribed the officers and others who were commanded to watch over them, by which means they were now and then winked at, or else so put upon their guard, that they knew how to get out of the way when the hue and cry was after them.

In addition to this precarious and humiliating way of picking up a bare subsistence, they got together old editions of plays and published them by subscription, and this fact almost establishes a certainty that the plays dated at that time were generally reprints.

One of these plays, *The Wild Goose Chase*, by BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, was published in 1652, "for the public use," says the title page, "of all the ingenious, and the private benefit of JOHN LOWIN, and JOSEPH TAYLER, servants to his

“late majesty, and by them dedicated to the honoured few lovers of dramatic poetry.”

In the dedication they so modestly described their wants, that the play sold very well; and, in so many instances as the experiment was repeated, they found it turn tolerably to account, but not equal to their exigencies, and therefore, such as knew any thing of business endeavoured at establishing themselves. Being however a set of proscribed characters, and what was worse, intolerably poor, it was difficult for them to know what calling to chuse, and how to find capital to carry on business.

POLLARD was the richest among them, but he left them at length, at the instance of his relations in the country, where he died about 1658 at a very great age; LOWIN kept an inn at Brentford, called the Three Pigeons, and at length died very poor, and at least as old as POLLARD. TAYLER was in some trifling business at RICHMOND, where he also died very old; and PERKINS and SUMNER, who followed some occupation together near Clerkenwell, did not linger long after their companions.

Some of the rest, as we shall see hereafter, being younger men, saw out the troubles and became the

principal actors immediately after the Restoration. HART, and others, notwithstanding their adversity during CROMWELL's usurpation, made fortunes in the reign of CHARLES the second.

There are many circumstances related by which we are desired to credit that after the total proscription of the theatre, which was in 1647, successful attempts were made to bring it again into reputation. I cannot, however, in spite of my inclination to believe this, and my diligence to find it confirmed, see any reason for relying upon these reports, which are contradictory, many of them even to refutation. Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT attempted some kind of theatrical exhibition, a short time before the Restoration, at Rutland House; and when the kingdom began to feel a glow of hope from the preparations of MONK, the scattered remains of the players began to collect themselves together.

At this time RHODES, a bookseller, who had been wardrobe keeper to the company at Blackfriars, boldly fitted up the Cockpit at Drury Lane; and, in addition to those whose names we have already seen, retained BETTERTON, and KY-  
NASTON, who had both been his apprentices.

The theatrical standard was now hoisted, and another company soon began to form at the Red Bull, and as this was during the short period between the death of CROMWELL and the Restoration, making about two years, it was very unlikely they met with any material success, for the kingdom had not sufficient leisure to pay them much attention.

It is, however, but fair to allow that they laid the foundation of what happened afterwards; and by having collected and digested something like a regular plan, they were better prepared for action when a real opportunity took place; for RHODES's company with some additional actors composed that set who performed under sir WILLIAM DAVENANT's patent; and the other made up the company of KILLIGREW.

It will be little necessary to attempt further proof that the theatre began to decline so early as PRYNNE's attack on it in 1633, and that of course no authors of any celebrity were or could be induced to assist it materially with their labours. This declension augmented gradually till 1660; when all impediments being removed, when the players, and many of the authors, being ready to resume their functions, when it was not only the wish but

the interest of the whole nation to laugh away the gloom in which it had been involved, two theatres were immediately established, one by virtue of a patent granted to sir WILLIAM DAVENANT, and another vesting the same right in HENRY KILLICREW, both grants being for ever.

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## CHAP. II.

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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THEATRE AT THE  
RESTORATION.

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IF the merit of SHAKESPEAR and his cōtemporaries maintained at least eight theatres at a time, without the advantages of scenes or actresses, one introduced to attract the view, and the other to charm the senses, there clearly must have been a deplorable deficiency in the dramatic productions at the Restoration; when two theatres at a time made so indifferent a shift to get on, that in order to give strength to their performances they united; and thus all the dramatic merit of the kingdom was concentrated in one company.

The steps that led to this union, which was not dissolved till seven years after the Revolution, it will be now necessary to trace. Under the patent granted to KILLIGREW, the actors were denominated the king's servants, and performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane; Sir WILLIAM

DAVENANT's company were called the Duke's Servants, and they performed first at Lincoln Inn Fields, and afterwards at the Duke's theatre in Dorset Gardens.

About ten of the king's company were on his majesty's household establishment. They were allowed scarlet cloth and lace for their uniform, and were styled by the Lord Chamberlain, Gentlemen of the Grand Chamber. This distinction does not, however, appear to have been extended to the Duke's company. Both were greatly respected and carressed at court, where, as well as at their respective theatres, they frequently performed in the presence of the royal family and the nobility.

Of so much consequence were they considered, and of such import to the state appeared their establishments, that the code of theatrical regulations, which we have seen issued by the command of LOUIS the fourteenth, and which deserves every commendation, seems if it had been copied from that of the English companies; for the court took cognizance of their private government; and whenever there were any disputes, either the king, or the duke, in person, condescended to decide on them.

But neither the renovation of the theatre after

so long an interdiction, the scenes, or the actresses, were able to satisfy the public without having recourse to SHAKESPEAR; whose plays, to prevent all possibility of discontent, as well as several of JONSON's productions, and also MASSINGER's and FLETCHER's were in the most scrupulous and impartial manner divided between them; for it was a strict standing regulation that no play performed at one house should be acted at the other.

As these plays were chosen in such a manner as answered the best purposes of both companies, the court not only ratified the choice but applauded their good sense in steering so impartially clear of each other. Thus while HART was celebrated in Othello, BETTERTON was famous in Hamlet.

I know not if this may be called a prudent method; for, though too much emulation leads to satiety, yet victory is gained by nobly struggling, and comparison is the criterion of excellence. At any rate it was not adopted by them to any good purpose; for DAVENANT finding his company weaken in the public estimation, introduced what was then and is at this moment the disgrace and reproach of the theatre\*.

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\* It cannot be supposed that I mean to advance any thing like an  
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Operas and masques took place of tragedies and comedies, and to *PYSCHÉ* and *CIRCE* yielded *CLEOPATRA* and *ROSALIND*. To see and to hear are one thing, and to think and to judge another, and nothing could more completely verify the truth of this than what had happened to the king's company upon *DAVENANT*'s bringing forward these auxiliary helps; for, though they were composed of performers much superior to those of the other, they

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assertion that ornament and scenery are not a very decorous and proper appendage to the theatre. Nothing but the extraordinary merit which we have examined both in authors and actors could possibly have kept up the stage to such a pitch of reputation as we have seen it in, unassisted as it was by these advantages; and even the admirable productions of *SHAKESPEAR* must naturally have received an augmented brilliancy from this auxiliary embellishment, not that they have altogether been so expensive as a single pantomime. I only reserve to myself a right to blame those innovations in this way which have prevailed to the injury of the drama, and shook the fair pretensions of tragedy and comedy to the first rank in the theatre. Go for masques, go for operas, go for spectacles if you will; let painting and music, those becoming attendants on poetry, aid the meritorious labours of their lovely sister; but let them keep within their own province. Let us have magic and fairy land, and let fairies bring about these transformations to the belief of which our minds are accommodated: but do not suffer stuffed elephants, paste-board lions, and leathern tigers to train the car of a real hero. Let us remember that these tricks were borrowed from our fantastic neighbours the French; and that, even in *FRANCE*, *CORNEILLE* with all his reputation never recovered the kick that was given to it by the necessity he was under of courting an auxiliary in the Flying Horse.

instantly experienced the most cold and mortifying neglect, while the houses and the coffers of the other house were completely filled; nor did they ever perfectly recover their estimation with the public, nor at all till they procured scenery and decorations from FRANCE and attacked their opponents with their own weapons.

Another advantage which the stage now began to boast was not only evidently necessary but perfectly rational. BURT, CLUN, HART, HAMMERTON, and KYNASTON, had hitherto been famous for performing female characters, and their reputation is very highly spoken of; but, as soon as Mrs. SAUNDERS, who afterwards married BETTERTON, and Mrs. DAVENPORT began to appear, and these were followed by others of the names of DAVIES, LONG, GIBBS, NORRIS, HOLDEN, and JENNINGS, the theatre seem to rennovate in earnest, and scenes of tenderness, at which every audience must before have materially revolted, received now an additional force and energy by being graced with the real attractions of female beauty and feminine delicacy\*.

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\* There was a clause, says an author, in one of these patents, but no doubt it was in both, which ran thus: "That whereas the  
" womens' parts in plays have hitherto been acted by men in the

In spite of all the precautions that had been taken by the king and the duke of YORK to prevent theatrical disputes this introduction of foreign mercenaries presently introduced also cabals and intrigues. Englishmen were not very well pleased at that insolence which they experienced from Frenchmen, or that nature and SHAKESPEAR should yield to a *contre tems*, or an *entrechat* \*.

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“ habits of women, at which some have taken offence, we do permit  
 “ and give leave, for the time to come, that all womens’ parts be  
 “ acted by women.”

\* A picture of those times is given in pretty lively colours by an author who seems to have known them well. He says, “ that though the town at the time of SHAKESPEAR was not by many degrees so populous as then,” meaning the reign of CHARLES the second, “ yet as better order was kept among those who frequented plays their success was more regular, and they themselves as well as their productions were more respected; for,” says he, “ as there was better order kept among the company that came, many people thought a play an innocent diversion for an idle hour or two, the plays themselves being then more instructive and moral: whereas of late the playhouses are so extremely pestered with vizard masks, and their trade occasioning continual quarrels and abuses, that many of the more civilized part of the town are uneasy in the company, and shun the theatre as they would a house of scandal. It is an argument of the worth of the plays and players of the last age, and easily intreated that they were much beyond ours in this, to consider that they could support themselves merely from their own merit, the weight of the matter, and the goodness of the action, without scenes or machines; whereas the present plays, with all their show, can hardly draw an audience,

This was certainly the moment to attempt innovation with success. A people who, in proportion as they had emancipated from gloom and sadness, were now plunging into every pleasure, even to unbridled licentiousness, were exactly the objects to be played on by presuming, cunning, and needy foreigners. Spectacle was the word; and, so completely did it prevail that at length the theatres themselves, yielding to the superior attractions of the puppet show in Salisbury Court, were obliged to petition in the same manner as *TERENCE* complained in his time of the rope dancers in *ROME*.

.. In the midst of these contentions, the public pleasures of the people were suspended by their public calamities. The plague and the fire of *LONDON* caused a suppression of all amusements for eighteen months.

These events, however, having passed away as every calamity in that reign did like a cloud in April, the sun of pleasure and voluptuousness shone brighter than ever. New entertainments were invented, new auxiliaries called in, and this is the time when, as *VOLTAIRE* tells us, *CAMBERT* came

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“unless there be the additional invitation of a signior *FIDELI*, a  
“monsieur *L'ABBE* or such some foreign regale expressed in the  
“bills.”

over and "performed his detestable music to the  
"English, who thought it excellent."

As it has been a good deal contended that decorations and scenes were not introduced on the English stage till after the events of the plague, and the fire, it is worth while to notice that this cannot be the truth, but that it is exactly as I have here stated. Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT was with the king in FRANCE, so was KILLIGREW, and there cannot be a doubt but they availed themselves of every fanciful dramatic decoration they saw there; for, though they had not at that time arrived to CORELILLE's flying horse, the freaks of PERRIN, which, as we have seen, were the ruin of the marquis de SOURDEAC, must no doubt have attracted the notice of CHARLES, and his followers; but stronger circumstance puts the matter out of doubt; for Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT did not live above a year and a half after the fire of LONDON, in which short period it would have been impossible to have carried such an improvement to any degree of perfection.

Left the circumstance escape me I must here beg that the reader will not confound the idea of THOMAS KILLIGREW with KILLIGREW the patentee. The first was a man of wit, and an excellent companion for the king and ROCHESTER,

and it was upon this account that it has been supposed in general that to him the patent was granted as manager of the king's company. This, however, certainly was not the case, for all the authors agree that it was given to HENRY KILLIGREW, and there is no doubt but that the patent itself would bear out this fact, although it is extremely difficult to ascertain the real person after all; for we know of no HENRY KILLIGREW but doctor HENRY, who was the brother of THOMAS, and a year younger than that famous wit, whereas the patent was made out to HENRY KILLIGREW, esquire.

It is certainly true that doctor HENRY KILLIGREW was a man of brilliant talents, that he wrote a play, and that he was father of that Mrs. ANNE KILLIGREW on whom DRYDEN wrote a celebrated and beautiful elegy; and if it were not for the palpable misnomer, and also that not a syllable has been hinted of the circumstance by his numerous biographers, it would really be within likelihood that he was the person alluded to; for HART was the acting manager in the king's company, and BETTERTON in the duke's, so that KILLIGREW and DAVENANT must be considered only as proprietors.

The truth of this business will, perhaps, never

be known, which is indeed more extraordinary than material; but the reason seems to be this. When the two companies in 1684 united, at which time the KILLIGREW, whoever he was, had perhaps died or withdrawn from the scheme, for by this time there were strange alterations, the plays were performed under sir WILLIAM DAVENANT's patent which descended as regularly as a personal estate; having been bequeathed to doctor CHARLES DAVENANT, by him assigned to his brother ALEXANDER, who sold his interest in it to CHRISTOPHER RICH, a lawyer; from him it came to his son, who left it to his four daughters, of whom it was purchased by Mr. COLMAN and his friends, and it has never been denied that, with this patent and this interest, descended also the dormant patent of KILLIGREW.

In a word, among all the histories, of all the KILLIGREWS, we do not find a single syllable that directs us to the knowledge of which of them possessed the patent; so that the matter must be left to the enquiry of the reader, who may, perhaps, not think the discovery worth the pains.

Before sir WILLIAM DAVENANT died, he began the theatre in Dorset Garden, but did not live to see it finished. It was opened in November, 1671, and on the following January, Drury Lane,

belonging to the king's company, was burnt down together with more than fifty houses. Sir CHRISTOPHER WREN was employed to renovate this phoenix; but there were so many directors and dictators that he left the managers, who had by this time begun to increase in number, and of course in opposition, to wrangle the matter out together; in consequence of which his whole plan was mutilated and ruined, and every convenience and accommodation, intended by him for the advantage of the public and the performers, spoiled and destroyed. It was, however, rebuilt and opened on the 26th of March, 1674.

Dorset Garden, however, by means of shew and parade, obtained a complete victory over Drury Lane, nature, and common sense. This induced the king's company, who were severely galled at such unmerited preference, to attempt at many expedients to revenge themselves; and, among the rest, authors were employed to parody and turn into ridicule the spectacles of the other house; which, as they could not excel them in splendour and shew, for otherwise the more nonsense the better, not only rendered all their attempts abortive, but fixed an indelible stigma upon them for having malevolently dared to question the judgment of the public.

It has, by some of the writers on the stage, been



mentioned that BETTERTON belonged to the king's company; and, when sir WILLIAM DAVENANT produced scenes, that he went over to FRANCE to procure others more splendid in order to oppose him; nay, some will have it that BETTERTON produced all the scenes. The fact is, BETTERTON went to FRANCE, at the express command of the king, to try, by a review of the French theatre, to add every possible improvement to the English; so that these scenes and decorations, which were really after the fire of LONDON, improved the duke's theatre so materially, that it greatly contributed to the downfall of their opponents.

We have here to lament that BETTERTON, whose own reputation was surely much more involved with that of SHAKESPEAR, than signor FIDELI, of whom LANGBAIN very properly speaks so contemptuously, could so far condescend to injure the real interest of the theatre as to become an encourager of this folly; but we have seen the best actors and the wisest managers bend to the fashion of the times, and however reprehensible might be the conduct of BETTERTON, the absurdity of his successors has left him little to blush at.

Though the performers at KILLEGREW's theatre had been acknowledged upon the whole as the best,

another reason why BETTERTON was supposed to have been one of them, they, about this time, dwindled considerably. Some had quitted the stage, some had died, and the remainder were old and infirm. It was at this favourable moment that BETTERTON, full of anxiety to provide comfortably for his comrades, proposed to unite the theatres, which union was at length effected. They now performed by the title of the king's servants under sir WILLIAM DAVENANT's patent, and after this time the patent of KILLIGREW does not seem to have been called into action.

HART soon after this retired, and MOHUN died; and now the theatre, instead of bringing a number of general interests into one point of view, grew distracted with its intestine broils. The particulars of these, however, we are not yet ripe for; I shall, therefore, leave the stage for the present, to examine into the merits of those men by whom it became celebrated.

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## CHAP. III.

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DAVENANT, SHIRLEY, AND RANDOLPH.

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As the authors now became not only more numerous but more generally known, it will be sufficient for me to detail the most material particulars relative to them that I have been able to collect. Men of considerable talents certainly lived in the reign of CHARLES the second, one of them may with justice be called our greatest poet, but the air of English taste at that time was too gross, too deleterious for the existence of refined unadulterated wit, the instructor of morality, and the friend of virtue. Brutal and licentious jests assumed the whole dominion of letters; flattery was a virtue, decency a reproach; and the surest way of procuring favour and protection was to prostitute those endowments which were intended by nature and reason to delight and instruct mankind.

Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT, to whose industry

and perseverance, the stage has many obligations, led a life chequered with various fortunes. He was the son of JOHN DAVENANT, a considerable vintner, who kept the Crown at OXFORD; and, as SHAKESPEAR very frequently called there in his journey from LONDON to WARWICKSHIRE, a curious report has prevailed that having been pleased to shew great attention to the young vintner when a child, sir WILLIAM owed not only his success to our great bard's instructions, but his being to his gallantry. .

Other circumstances were adduced to corroborate this report, and among them it was said that SHAKESPEAR was his godfather, and that he was christened WILLIAM. Nay, he was said to resemble him very strongly in every feature, but particularly about the nose; but this fact was afterwards left undecided, for sir WILLIAM, having unfortunately lost his nose, that evidence of SHAKESPEAR's incontinence was removed out of the way.

This report, however, has never been credited, which as it was invidious is rather wonderful, for it has been decided that Mrs. DAVENANT was a woman of unblemished reputation, and that all SHAKESPEAR's civility and attention were no more

than a tribute of friendship and respect to her husband, for whom he had a high opinion and regard.

In whatever way we consider this gentleman's life, something that bespeaks extraordinary talents will be found in it. His genius soaring above the trammels of the university, he quitted it very early and went to FRANCE in the suite of the duchess of RICHMOND; afterwards he was retained by that unfortunate lord BROOK, whose life we have seen, and whose cruel death left our poet without a patron.

He now turned his mind to literature; and, when JONSON died, became a successful candidate against MAY for the vacant laurel. This trait of favour and attention from the king he never forgot, for when the troubles began he artfully and successfully stirred up the people in his behalf, and in consequence of his loyal conduct, which was followed up by great personal bravery, he received the honour of knighthood on the field of battle at the siege of GLOCESTER.

He continued firmly and honourably devoted to the king, and was at length taken prisoner and con-

fined in Cowes castle ; but nothing could conquer that firmness which was the marking feature of his character. So far from his being appalled with the prospect of death which seemed to look him full in the face, he worked on his celebrated poem of *Gondibert*, two books of which he had written in FRANCE. At length two aldermen of YORK towards whom he had conducted himself with the truest clemency when they were prisoners and in his power, exerted their influence to save him, and he was soon after at large.

We have seen that at the Restoration he became manager of the duke of YORK's company ; I shall, therefore, examine into the merits of those dramatic pieces which, previous to that event, at, and after it, gave his name a considerable consequence as a dramatic writer. As these pieces, however, were in general rather fitted to the stage than written for it, and as, in consequence, they are none of them upon the list of acting plays, the intelligence we get concerning them is very blind and uncertain ; and, were it not for LANGBAIN, with whom DAVENANT seems to have been a great favourite, we should be almost in the dark upon this subject.

*Albovine, King of the Lombards*, bears date 1629. It is doubtful at what place this play was performed,

but it is taken from a novel by BANDELLO, and was dedicated to the duke of SOMERSET, and the dedication was followed up by eight copies of commendatory verses.

*Cruel Brother*, 1730, said to have been performed at Blackfriars, but we know nothing of either its origin or success. The *Just Italian*, 1730, of this play there is no further account than that it was performed at Blackfriars and introduced by verses written by HOPKINS and CAREW. The *Temple of Love*, 1634. Let it be remembered that I vouch for no dates between 1633 and 1660. This was a masque and contradicts the account that scenes were not known till the Restoration, for the author himself has these words: "This masque, for the invention, variety of scenes, apparitions and richness of habits, was generally approved to be one of the most magnificent that had been done in ENGLAND." The fact is scenes were known before, for they were introduced by INIGO JONES; but they were too expensive to be exhibited any where but at court.

*Triumphs of the Prince d'Amour*, was another piece of the same kind, the music was composed by HENRY and WILLIAM LAWES. The *Platonic Lovers*, 1636, performed at Blackfriars. Very little

is said about this piece, and it is probable that its success was very indifferent, for it was not printed singly but waited for a play called *The Wits* to induce its sale.

The *Wits* performed at Blackfriars in the same year. This play, which was taken from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's *Wit at several Weapons*, had considerable success, and was afterwards revived at the duke's theatre. It is highly complimented by CAREW; *Britannia Triumphant*, and *Salmacida Spolia*, were masques. The *Unfortunate Lovers*, was a tragedy, so was *Love and Honour*, which last was performed with good success.

These pieces, whatever was the exact time of their first appearance, are all that DAVENANT produced till 1656, at which time, as we have seen, he got possession of Rutland House, where he contrived a spectacle by declamation, as he calls it, after the manner of the ancients, and afterwards he brought out the *Siege of Rhodes* there, which was certainly the first attempt to introduce scenes into a common theatre, for the title runs thus:

“ The *Siege of Rhodes*, made a representation  
“ by the art of perspective in scenes, and the story



“ sung in recitative music, at the back part of Rutland House, in the upper end of Aldersgate Street, “ LONDON, 1656.” With this play DAVENANT opened his theatre after the Restoration, and it was warmly applauded. The event happened in the reign of SOLYMAN the second, and the story is well calculated to be conveyed through the medium of scenery and decoration.

The *Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, and The *History of Sir Francis Drake*, were pieces performed at the Cockpit in 1658, and expressed, as it was termed, by instrumental and vocal music. These plays might have been suffered but they were not, properly speaking, permitted, and the accounts are that they would not have been suffered at all had not OLIVER CROMWELL in the first of them found something that pleased him wonderfully; for that it gave him a clue to achieve some conquests that he had meditated against PERU himself. This is a strange assertion, and therefore I advise my readers to believe as much of it as reflection permits them to credit.

The *Rivals*, performed in 1668, is little more than attributed to DAVENANT. It was performed at his theatre, and is merely an alteration of FLETCHER'S *Noble Kinsmen*. The *Man's the Master*,

1669, is exactly the subject of SCARRON's *Jodelet*, and a mixture of *L'Heritier Ridicule*, and this will shew that DAVENANT was determined to convince the public he was a good purveyor for their pleasures.

The *Fair Favourite*, a tragi comedy, 1673. The success of this piece is not known, but *Law against Lovers* became very popular, and no wonder, for it was made up of SHAKESPEAR's *Measure for Measure*, and *Much ado about Nothing*. DAVENANT however has not done any service to either of these plays, and, as if he had not mutilated them enough by cutting them into one, he has affected to polish the language. In short it succeeded, which was natural enough, for the audience were glad to see the resemblance of SHAKESPEAR in any dress.

*News from Plymouth*, 1673, according to LANGBAIN, was performed with good success. *A Playhouse to Let*, is a strange farago, intended for no other purpose than to gather up all those materials which were performed by stealth in the time of CROMWELL. These tossed up with a kind of an introductory first act, make an entertainment certainly full of variety but as certainly full of absurdity.

To throw with success MOLIERE's *Cocu Imma-*

*ginaire*, *The History of Sir Francis Drake*, *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, and *The Actions of Cæsar. Antony and Cleopatra*, into one play is as strong an instance of an author's courage and the forbearance of an audience as I believe can be adduced; but to such reputation were music and scenery arrived that the absurder the vehicle the higher the admiration; for, besides the incomprehensible CAMBERT, they by this time began to have a taste for LULLY.

The next piece of this author called *The Siege*, is so little remembered that no account can be gathered either of its merit or its success. Its date is 1673, so is that of another piece called *Distresses*, of which play we know as little as to its public celebrity. An alteration of *Macbeth* adapted to the spirit of the times, and decorated with scenery and music, was the last attempt of this author, which bears the date of 1674; and, at some time in his life, he altered the *Tempest*, that it might have the same stage advantages, in conjunction with DRYDEN.

From these circumstances it appears, from the plays themselves, that their dates were at the time they were printed, and their success such as might be expected from the labours of a man whose study

was rather to keep a pleasing variety for the stage, as a manager, than to become a candidate for public fame as an author; and this will apply, trace the merit of DAVENANT how you may; for he wrote well, strong and readily; the sterling materials, therefore, that were necessary to work up plays when they were obliged to go alone were useless now they were either dandled or trained in leading strings; and nothing can prove this more forcibly than a perusal of those of his plays that are extant, which are none of them by any means regular, and which are fitted to the stage even more hastily and slovenly than those of DRYDEN.

DAVENANT nevertheless wrote sensibly and meritoriously, but his best talents were not for the stage, and there is more intrinsic value in his *Gondibert* than all his dramatic productions put together. DRYDEN speaks of him as one who had a quick fancy, and an imagination equal to the accomplishment of every thing he projected. He says that no subject could be proposed to him on which he would not suddenly produce a thought extremely pleasant and surprizing. WALLER, COWLEY, and HOBBS, wrote also highly in favour of his works. In short, he was a man of strong intellects, and extremely proper for the situation he held; which would have been manifest more to his honour had

not a false taste answered his purpose, and, therefore, he would have been his own worldly enemy to have had recourse to real taste, but at last with all his ingenuity he would have cut but an indifferent figure by the side of even the second rate class of dramatic poets in the reign of JAMES the first, who had nothing to depend upon but intrinsic merit.

SHIRLEY was a much better dramatic writer than sir WILLIAM DAVENANT; which opinion some of his successors have so steadily held that without scruple, in the fond imagination that they were following the dictates of their own fancy, they have followed him word for word. Mrs. BEHN, BULLOCK, and FOOTE, have taken materials from him; and even DRYDEN has given no mean account of him.

SHIRLEY, like WEBSTER was a writer of plays, and a schoolmaster, but he had much more merit at either profession. According as the times were peaceable or turbulent, he pursued one or the other of these occupations. Some of his plays were produced soon after the death of JAMES the first, but their success does not appear to have been equal to their merit till they were brought forward at the Restoration. He did not, however, live long enough to reap any solid advantages from this revival of his

reputation; for, having been burnt out with his family at the dreadful fire in 1666, both he and his wife were so seized with terror at the shocking event that they died within the space of four and twenty hours, and were buried in the same grave.

SHIRLEY's dramatic works are said to have been printed according to the following dates. The *Wedding*, 1629, was performed at the Phoenix. This play is well spoken of, and was twice revived with success. The *Grateful Servant*, 1630, which is said to have been greatly applauded, was accompanied by eight copies of verses, two of them written in Latin. This comedy was revived twice, but its reception was not perhaps equal to SHIRLEY's expectation, for he took the principal circumstance in it to assist him in the plot of the *Humourous Courtier*.

The *School of Compliment*, though brought out third was written first. Its date is 1631, and it does not seem to have been so successful as either of the others. The *Changes*, 1632, was greatly successful, both during the author's life time and after his death, till DRYDEN took a principal circumstance into his *Maiden Queen*; which, not being liked as he introduced it, the innocent, as we fre-

quently see in life, suffered for being in company with the guilty.

*Contention for Honour and Riches*, and *The Triumph of Peace*, were masques, and had success through the medium of decoration. *The Witty Fair One*, 1633, has merit, but its reception did not answer the author's hopes or expectations. Of *The Bird in the Cage*, also in 1633, we have different reports. It had great success on the stage, and was revived with the highest approbation on its being printed, not only on account of the play itself but an ironical dedication to the famous PRYNN, whose attack on the theatre we have gone through the history of. It is a singular story and strangely conducted, but those who read it will find in it some sterling materials.

The *Traytor*, which is little more than a judicious alteration of a piece under the same title written by one RIVERS, a Jesuit, was performed in 1635, and revived in 1692, as well as twenty-six years afterwards with alterations by BULLOCK, but it never did much; indeed tragedy was not the forte of SHIRLEY.

The *Lady of Pleasure*, 1637. This play is not

remarkable for any striking merit, for on the contrary it is full of indecency; but this was the vice of the times, and SHIRLEY, not content with introducing the circumstance of a man's enjoying the person of a young lady and fancying her the devil, in his *Grateful Servant*, which, as we have seen, was recommended by eight copies of verses, has brought it forward again in this piece. Mrs. BEHN, however, anxious to make her own sex as knowing as possible, has again lashed up this rattle with the addition of a little green fat, in her play of the *Lucky Chance*.

The *Young Admiral*, 1637, performed at a private house in Drury Lane, is a play of very mediocre pretensions. The *Example*, same year. This is a tragi comedy as well as the last, and like that it has but a faint title to commendation. *Hyde Park*, 1637 again. We get at SHIRLEY's genius best when we get to his comedies. This play, though far from a perfect performance, has many flashes of excellent humour, but it is irregular and undramatic; and, like almost the whole of this author's works, requires to be regulated by a masterly hand. In short, there is too much of FLETCHER about SHIRLEY to ensure him a permanent reputation.

His next comedy, *The Gangster*, is a strong



proof of this. The plot, though perfectly natural, is full of perplexity, but there are parts of it that would do credit to any author. The characters are strong, and the moral is interesting. This play was altered by CHARLES JOHNSON, and called *The Wife's Relief*, but his language does not mix well with SHIRLEY'S. GARRICK, who better understood the stage, brought it forward under the title of *The Gamesters*, but he omitted certainly the two strongest written scenes in the whole play, and thus it has never yet been properly altered; if it were to be, there can be no doubt but it would keep a respectable stand among the stock list.

We next find two tragi-comedies, one called *The Royal Master*, and the other *The Duke's Mistress*. The first had ten copies of complimentary verses prefixed to it, though it had a short existence, and the other sneaked out of the world without being noticed at all. *The Maid's Revenge* is said to have been SHIRLEY'S second play, and indeed there is every appearance of it, for it is a very puerile performance. *Chabot, Admiral of France*, is a work of but little merit. These four last plays bear date 1638.

*The Ball*. A play in which SHIRLEY is said to have been assisted by GEORGE CHAPMAN. *Arcadia*. This play is founded on sir PHILIP SIDNEY'S *Ar-*

*cadia*, a poem incapable of being dramatized; and, as if it was not dull and perplexed enough in SHIRLEY's attempt to bring it on the stage, it has been since done into a tragedy by a Mr. MACNAMARA MORCAN; and though stuffed with the most contemptible mixture of pucility and bombast, had success through the acting of BARRY and Miss NOSSITER.

The *Humourous Courtier* was performed with good success. Whoever searches for SHIRLEY's merit will find it in comedy. The *Opportunity*. There is a resemblance in this play of *Measure for Measure*, and other stories. It is not the best play of this author, but it is far from a bad one.

*St. Patrick for Ireland* is a historical play; but it only contains a part of the story, and is in other respects a loose and uninteresting performance. In *Love's Cruelty*, a tragedy, there is not much to boast of. The strange circumstance of a husband's concealing his wife's adultery is too revolting. The *Constant Maid* is a comedy that contains much pleafantry, but there is very little novelty in the incidents or the author's management of them. The seven last pieces bear date 1640.

The *Coronation*, which was said to have been

written singly by FLETCHER, is also dated 1610. SHIRLEY laid claim to it, and his claim was allowed. It is not very material, however, who wrote it, except for the merit of particular passages, for as a play it has not much to boast of. The *Triumph of Beauty* is a masque, which was performed for the amusement of some young noblemen. The subject is the *Judgment of Paris*.

*The Brothers.* This subject, which has been treated repeatedly ever since TERENCE, cannot fail to succeed according to the merit of the different authors who choose it; and, whether we instance this play—the *Squire of Alsatia*, *Tom Jones*, the *School for Scandal* or any other of those numerous productions, either plays or novels, into which the essence of this subject has been introduced, it must be considered as the most pardonable plagiarism that can be, because the interest is affecting and always in nature.

*The Sisters.* There are four or five French things, which have a resemblance to this comedy. SHIRLEY's play has merit in parts, but is not well hung together, and, therefore, the interest palls. The *Doubtful Heir* is another of those mixtures of merit and defect which we perpetually find in this author. You always pity him for making FLETCHER

his model. The *Impostor* is fairly criticised by the same observation.

The *Cardinal* is a tragedy. Its success we have no information of, but in the closet we easily discover what it ought to have been. It creates but little interest, and is upon the whole, in spite of some good writing, a very dull thing. One has ground to suspect that many of these plays were not produced at the time they were said to have been performed. We perceive this in the next play of this author, called *The Court Secret*, which was intended to have been performed but was interdicted.

*Cupid and Death.* This is a masque, and every body knows that the subject must be the changing of their arrows. We are told that it was performed in March 26, 1653, but this can scarcely be credited, unless we can also believe that CROMWELL strained a point to please the Portuguese ambassador, before whom it is said to have been represented. It is difficult to reconcile this however, especially when we reflect that this was the very time the poor actors were so frequently hunted about and sent to prison. Looking further I find the date in another author 1658, and in LANGBAIN 1659.

The *Politician*, and The *Gentlemen of Venice*,

are tragi comedies and their dates 1658. In most of the accounts of them, they are pieces of inconsiderable merit. The first is taken from MONTGOMERY'S *Urania*, and the other from *Don Quixote*. The *Contention of Ajax and Ulysses for the Armour of Achilles*, is a masque, or interlude, written to serve some temporary purpose.

We have now *Honoria and Mammon* a comedy, date 1649, and *Andromana*, a tragedy, which make up all the works of SHIRLEY that have been printed. He is said besides to have written *St. Albans*, a tragedy, *Look to the Lady*, a comedy, and *Rosania, or Love's Victory*, a comedy, but these were never published. *Honoria and Mammon* is nothing more than the *Contention for Honour and Riches*, swelled from an interlude into a comedy, and *Andromana, or the Merchant's Wife*, is sir PHILIP SIDNEY'S *Arcadia*, taken up again to less purpose than when it was handled the first time.

Thus we have enumerated at least the plays of SHIRLEY. To criticise them would require more room than can here be spared. His works, however, have been at different times, except the three last mentioned pieces, all published, but are difficult to be got at, though the essence of them will be found in other authors, which circumstance

has made SHIRLEY a strong supporter of the theatre, and there can be no doubt that, though all his plays appear to be written before the Restoration, they very materially, through the management of DAVENANT contributed to its reputation immediately after it; for his talents have been frequently a theme of admiration for the critics, and, had he not lived in a very discouraging time, instead of seeing his works pilfered and mutilated, we should have had the satisfaction and the credit of finding his name placed greatly above others who, with shallower pretensions, have been considered as better writers.

RANDOLPH was a writer of very extraordinary abilities. He was one of the very few in whom learning became no clog to genius, and this seems to have been because in him the natural and acquired qualities were tempered by a most equitable mean in his judgement. I cannot comprehend that language can be more beautiful, more sensible, more keen, more just, than in many parts of the *Muses Looking Glass*. It does not, however, appear, though RANDOLPH, for the specimen we have of him, was perhaps the best poet between SPENCER and DRYDEN, that the drama was his true style of writing. His language was above common nature; it was ever elevated, ever soaring, and therefore its best

vehicle was rhyme and measure. But let us look at his dramatic pieces, which are six in number.

*Aristippus*, a comedy, date 1630. This piece seems to have been written facetiously to excuse those excesses to which RANDOLPH was indeed too fatally attached, for they killed him at the age of twenty-nine. It is called *Aristippus, or the Jovial Philosopher, demonstratively proving that quarts, pints, and pottles are sometimes necessary authors in a scholar's library*. I think it very unlikely that this *Feux d'esprit*, though it was published, was ever performed. The *Conceited Pedlar*, was a mere bagatelle that accompanied the above play.

The *Jealous Lovers*, which is dated 1632, is said to be the best of RANDOLPH'S works. The writing is certainly not so masterly as that of the *Muses Looking Glass*, but taking it as a regular comedy there can be no doubt but the critics are right. He was the darling wit of the university, the students delighted in performing this play themselves, and almost every man of eminent genius wrote something in praise of it.

These panegyrics are too long to transcribe. The sense of one of them is, that the *Jealous Lovers*

ought to be conserved in some great library ; that if, through chance or injury of time, ARISTOPHANES, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE should be lost to the world, their united merit might be recognized in this play ; for says the panegyrist thou hast drawn the pander, the gull, the jealous lover, the doating father, the shark, the curst wife. All these, says he, thou hast

So truly given in their own proper style  
As if thy active soul had dwelt a while  
In each man's body ; and at length had seen  
How in their humours they themselves demean.

The *Muses Looking Glafs*, date 1638. A single objection lies against the admission that this is one of the greatest efforts of human genius, and even this objection is almost done away in the closet. The *Muses Looking Glafs*, which is called a comedy, is certainly nothing more than a collection of detached scenes which, though they have a laudable and moral tendency, grow cold from being declamatory and unimportant for want of a plot, to the denouement of which the characters ought to be impelled by one natural interest. In short, this succession of dialogues are conveyed to the audience through a grex, and therefore with the disappearance of each character all concern ceases with the real auditor.



On this account the *Muses Looking Glafs* can never generally fucceed. Nothing can be finer than the fubtle variety of arguments by which COLAX reconciles difcontent, fool hardipeds, cowardly fear, voluptuousnefs, felf denial, avarice, prodigality, and the prodigious fhades of vice and folly which this capable and difcriminating author has introduced into his play; but if COLAX is tired with them and adminifters to their vanity to get rid of them how much more muft the audience cool, in fpite of their wrefted admiration of thofe charming arguments, which feem to pervade all the paffions, and their diftinctions, in human nature.

Invention was almoft exhausted in its praife, and among the efforts of its numerous admirers we find the following happy diftich by WEST.

Who looks within his clearer glafs, will fay  
At once he wrote on ethic tract, and play.

*Amyntas, or the Impossible Dowry*, date 1638, has great beauty. It is replete with the beft traits which diftinguifhed GUARINI, and TASSO, without the fervile refemblance of either. With fimplicity, it is full of elevation; and, though correctly natural, it is highly dignified. In fhort, it is one of the fineft fpecimens of pastoral poetry in this language, and the fubject is appropriate and interefting; but not

being filled with a sufficient variety of characters, and incidents, to give it life on the stage, it has never been revived with success.

His last play was called *Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery*. This being only an ingenious translation from the *Plutus* of ARISTOPHANES, it was too extravagant a business to succeed, had it been attempted. but there is reason to suppose it was never performed.

The works of this author, beautiful and correct as they are every where as writings, are by no means sufficiently dramatic; and, therefore, they have furnished a large source of materials for those who could not write so well but who could manage better. DODSLEY says with his usual candour and frankness, at the same time that he confesses his obligations to RANDOLPH for his *Toyshop*, the hint of which he took from the *Conceited Pedlar*, that “the *Muses Looking Glass* has been always esteemed as “an excellent common place book to instruct dramatic authors in the art of drawing characters.”

This holds good in a much stronger degree. No author for the quantity he wrote has been so pilfered as RANDOLPH, and no wonder. Where should men find materials but at the fountain head?

'Tis universally allowed that there never was a writer more original. When his brother published his works in 1664, which ran through five editions, a friend, on reading them, wrote the following lines:

With what an extasy shall we behold  
This book? Which is no ghost of any old  
Worm eaten author: here's no jest, or hint,  
It had his head both for its ore, and mint.  
Were't not for some translations, none could know  
Whether he had e'er looked in book or no.

IN RANDOLPH the world certainly lost an invaluable treasure; for, if in the midst of those fashionable excesses into which he so thoughtlessly plunged, and which cut him off so early in life, he was able to produce so many sterling and admirable proofs of great and extraordinary genius, particular learning, and general information; what might not have been expected from him had he lived to have matured such talents, to have felt the honest pride derived from meritorious exertions, and a consciousness of the superior dignity resulting from the power and the gratification of conveying delight and instruction to mankind.

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## CHAP. IV.

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MAY, BROME, MILTON, AND COWLEY.

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BEFORE I examine the productions of DRYDEN and other dramatic authors, whose labours stretch beyond the Revolution, I shall go through all those who finished their career before that event; taking them by seniority either as to fame or the time in which they wrote.

MAY, who was, as we have seen, competitor with sir WILLIAM DAVENANT for the laurel, was a man of no mean abilities. General poetry, however, and history, were more congenial to his talents than the stage. He seems to have manifested all the vexation of a disappointed man from the moment he failed in his contention with sir WILLIAM DAVENANT; for, after having been an accomplished and plyant courtier, out of mere picque and resentment, he espoused the republican cause without motive, or without principle; acting a part exactly

opposite to the conduct of DAVENANT, whose loyalty, and duty, have been the theme of every man's admiration.

Lord CLARENDON after commending his good qualities as a man, and extolling his merit as a poet and a historian, is forced into the following confession: " Yet, to shew that pride and envy have  
" their influence upon the narrowest minds, and  
" which have the greatest semblance of humility,  
" though he had received much countenance, and  
" a very considerable donative from the king, upon  
" his majesty's refusing to give him a small pension,  
" which he had designed and promised to another  
" very ingenious person, whose qualities he thought  
" inferior to his own, he fell from his duty and all  
" his former friends, and prostituted himself to the  
" vile office of celebrating the infamous acts of  
" those who were in rebellion against the king;  
" which he did so meanly, that he seemed to all  
" men to have lost his wits when he left his honesty;  
" and shortly after died miserable and neglected,  
" and deserves to be forgotten."

His translation of LUCAN's *Pharfalia*, and his own supplement of LUCAN, are allowed to be good poetry, and his history of RICHARD the second, is

deservedly celebrated. His plays, five in number, had considerable merit.

*Antigone*, a tragedy, date 1631. This play is borrowed from SOPHOCLES, SENECA, and STATIUS; and, though it has merit in the writing, is dull and heavy and too unwieldy to accommodate itself to action, and therefore pleases readers tolerably well, but hearers not at all.

The *Heir*, a comedy, dated 1633, has a great share of merit. It was published by DOWDLEY in his collection of old plays, and is certainly full of interesting situation and strong characteristic writing; but it is by no means a perfect play, nor can it be made so. The enmity of the two houses, the strange demand of the king that LEUCOTHOE shall yield to his desires, and the constable, and the watch, who seize EUGENIO, are all stolen from SHAKESPEAR; but these plagiaries are coarse caricatures, and what's worse are introduced without a fair drift or motive.

The under plot is gross and indelicate; and, though there is some whim in making SHALLOW, out of vanity and boasting, take the disgrace to himself of LUCY's being with child by him, though he knows he never had any criminal intercourse with her; her being delivered of a pillow is failing rather

too near the wind. Upon the whole there is something to admire in this play but chalk drawings from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Much ado about Nothing*, and those faint and without force, cannot possibly be considered as an admissible substitute for those admirable pictures of nature and truth, which are so greatly superior in the productions of our incomparable bard.

*Agrippina*, a tragedy, date 1628, is taken from XIPHILINUS, TACITUS, and SUTTONIUS. The subject is unproductive and never has succeeded on any stage, notwithstanding the various ways it has been attempted to be brought forward. MAY's effort is but weak, and therefore, though it was printed at three different periods, it has been but little known on the stage.

*Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt*, date 1654. In this tragedy MAY either to manifest his candour, or his reading, has given the names of six classical writers, from whose works he took this piece, besides having followed DANIEL, and consulted two or three others; yet with all these good materials, so true it is that too many cooks spoil the broth, he has not been able to produce a passable play.

*The Old Couple*, a comedy, date 1658, which

accompanies the *Heir* in DODSLEY's collection, is written to expose the vice of covetousness. It abounds with singular and ludicrous circumstances, and contains some pleasantries and humour. There is something well conceived in the circumstance of turning the heart of EARTHWORM from avariciousness to benevolence; but the mode is too sudden for it cannot be in nature that rooted covetousness should find an instantaneous cure. As to the tricks that are introduced, first to perplex and afterwards to unravel the plot, they are tame and hackneyed and excite more curiosity than they gratify. If upon the whole, however, it were simplified it does not want requisites to form a good comedy; but a bungler could not effect it, and a man of talents would not think it worth his while to make the trial.

PHILIPS and WINSTANTLY ascribe to MAY two other plays; but it is not proved that one of them was ever seen, and it is proved beyond contradiction that the other was printed before MAY was born. This poet was a proof that FALSTAFF's observation, "fretting and grief puffs a man up like a bladder," may be truth, for he lived a life of vexation and disappointment, and was perpetually a prey to the irritability natural to it, yet he enjoyed



unconquerable health, and grew so immensely fat that he was choaked with his night cap.

BROME, who was originally a menial servant of JONSON, had good sense enough to avail himself of as much as would serve his purpose of those dogmatic lessons, which, in his ostentation of wit his preceptor forced upon all those who would listen to them. JONSON used to brag that of all his pupils BROME had the most accommodating docility. His words are said to have been that "BROME made a very good use of the improvement he had acquired during a long apprenticeship under so skilful a master."

The best advantage BROME took of JONSON's lessons was to study men and manners; for, as he had strength of mind enough to invent his own plots, and good sense enough to keep to comedy, which he felt to be his proper forte, he found that observation would answer his purpose, perhaps, better than reading. There seems also to have been another piece of cunning about him for which he ought to be commended. It was that, however he might feel himself equal to the task of writing plays, and therefore probably find it necessary to treasure up materials for the undertaking, knowing and perhaps

fearing the irascible temper of JONSON, he took care not to set himself up as his rival to any formidable degree, for he produced but one play during the life time of his master.

This was the *Northern Lass*, 1632. It was commended by verses from JONSON and others, and is well spoken of. Indeed it is said to be one of the best of this author's plays, no one of which, to say truth, ever arrived to any very eminent degree of reputation. They all contain true character, sound language, and natural situation, and they create interest, but none of these requisites are given with sufficient force to effect the mind materially. This comedy was twice revived, the last time with the addition of songs composed by DANIEL PURCELL, and this seems to be what is wanting to give BROME consequence as a dramatic writer. For there is just enough plot and good dialogue in his comedies as might fill up the intervals between the songs of what we call a comic opera.

His next comedy is dated 1640. It is called *The Sparagus Garden*, and is of the complexion of the last; but it is even lighter; and, as it has never been revived with songs, it has been lost to the theatre for ought we can learn ever since the first season of its

representation. *Antipodes*, same year, shared the same fate.

The *Jovial Crew* is dated 1652. This piece gives us a complete clue to judge of the merits of this author. It has been frequently revived, and it is in the recollection of many of the public, that embellished with some sweet music by ARNE, and performed with great strength it had a considerable run at Covent Garden theatre, at which time the town received it as a production full of humour, whim, and pleasantry; but it must be confessed, had it not been for that music, and that strength, its pretensions are not very far above mediocrity, and after all, as we saw it then, it did not come from the hands of of BROME, but had been completely altered into a ballad opera by one ROOME who was an undertaker for funerals as well as for ballad operas, and who, somehow or other, offended POPE and was therefore introduced into the *Dunciad*.

In the state ROOME left the *Jovial Crew*, it was found by some theatrical amateurs, who improved it still further, and it was not till it had received all this improvement that it came out at Covent Garden, at which time it was patronized by the celebrated and truly amiable sir WILLIAM YOUNG, whose

heart was full of social virtue, and whose philanthropy and beneficence have been the theme of all the polite circles in the WEST INDIES and in ENGLAND.

The *Mad Couple well Matched*, 1653, had little success with BROME; but having broadness enough in its humour to bear the title of *The Debauchee, or the Credulous Cuckold*, Mrs. BEHN caught at an opportunity to favourite to the bent of her genius, and brought it forward with some success under that title. *Novella*, 1653, has a good character given it by LANGBAIN and others; but, though it has nature and interest to a certain degree, I cannot think with them that it exceeds many comedies of their time.

The *Court Beggar*, said to have been performed in 1632, and printed 1653, is like almost every thing else of this author who sometimes got beyond mediocrity but never arrived at excellence. The *City Wit*, 1653, The *Damofelle* same year, The *Queen's Exchange*, 1657, which was afterwards revived under the title of *The Royal Exchange*, and the *English Moor*, 1659, may be known by the same mode of description.

The *Love Sick Court*, 1658, *Covent Garden*

*Weeded*, same year, *New Academy*, and *The Queen and Concubine*, make up the whole of this author's works, not one of which pieces will bear a high eulogium. In short, we must consider Brome as a creditable author, faithful to nature, and anxious to acquire meritorious praise, but all his productions are deficient in that strength and force without which no production can maintain a permanent reputation on the stage.

The *Comus*, and *Samson Agonistes*, of MILTON, give me a title to introduce that great man into this work, which I should do to much stronger effect could my faint praise add the smallest lustre to his splendid reputation; or, that accomplished, were not the happiest effusions the mind can conceive, or the pen transfix already anticipated by the delight of his numerous admirers.

It will be impossible here, even were my inclination ever so strong to enquire into the variety of opinions that have been entertained by different writers of MILTON's public and private conduct, his sentiments or their incentives, his actions or their motives. Whether his political disquisitions are to be ascribed to principle or interest, his religious doctrines to piety or hypocrisy, whether he lived in penury or prosperity, whether he "over

“ looked the milder excellence of suavity and soft-  
 “ nefs and was a lion that had not skill in dandling  
 “ the kid.” or whether, “ he was open and affable,  
 “ and his conversation easy, chearful, and instruct-  
 “ ive.” Whether, in short, according to one great  
 man, “ he bore his misfortunes with patience and  
 “ resignation, and that, after he was blind, his three  
 “ daughters used to read to him;” or, according to  
 “ another, “ that he was impatient of suffering, and  
 “ that his daughters could not read at all.”

We have only to go over the different accounts of MILTON's life and character, and there is nothing contradictory but we must submit to acknowledge. He was a catholic, he was a protestant, he was neither. He rejected prayer, and therefore did not admit religion, and yet in his *Paradise Lost* he makes our first parents pray for a continuation of happiness in a state of innocence, and for a restoration of it after the fall.

As to his political opinions he is on all hands allowed to have been to blame, but in this he is as much excused as reprobated. If by one author we are told “ that he was an acrimonious and furly re-  
 “ publican, for that he hated all those whom he was  
 “ required to obey; that his predominant desire was  
 “ to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt

“ not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to  
 “ authority,” all which would seem to prove that  
 he was mad as well as blind. We are informed by  
 another, “ that his moral and religious character  
 “ were excellent but certainly pushed too far; for  
 “ there were seasons enough in his life when his  
 “ zeal carried both to a fanatical height, and when  
 “ he might be said to have been mad with virtue  
 “ and religion,” which if we allow it is not madness  
 of the same colour with the other author’s assertion.

Leaving those matters and rejecting all enquiry  
 whether MILTON was tall and well made, short and  
 thick, whether his favourite weapon in the field was  
 the rapier or the back sword, or his constant instru-  
 ment in the closet was the organ or the theorbo,  
 whether his muse was coy at one season and com-  
 plying at another, whether, when he wrote, he took  
 pen and ink like Mr. JOHNSON, or stewed prunes  
 like Mr. BAYES; whether he was a bashaw in his  
 house and looked upon women with contempt; or  
 whether he instructed and delighted them by the  
 charms of his conversation; let us examine his li-  
 terary merit and opinions.

Going into these as far as my circumscribed plan  
 will allow I shall not be very solicitous to induce  
 the reader’s belief that MILTON, though he might

very naturally set a high value on SPENCER and SHAKESPEAR could either consider COWLEY a great writer, whose genius was totally dissimilar to his own, or DRYDEN, whose soul was formed of materials extremely like that of MILTON, no writer at all.

Certainly MILTON had a high value for foreign authors as well ancient as modern, and he was qualified more to taste their beauties than perhaps any Englishman of great genius that then existed; for he knew correctly most of the living and dead languages; but this would confirm in him a more competent power to decide on the merits of his countrymen, unless we can believe what has been insinuated that he extolled COWLEY because he was dead and there was no danger in him, and decried DRYDEN because he was living and capable of proving a rival. Let us believe that his mind was too firm, and his sentiments too sublime to admit of such unprincipled injustice, or such pitiful fluctuation.

As every thing lyric is in its nature dramatic, dithyrambics having been the origin of the drama, and lyric poetry being, as MILTON expresses it, wedded to music, it will not be going out of my way



to speak of *Lycidas*, *Il Penseroso*, and *L'Allegro*. To say truth, the metre of MILTON is every where musical, which is not wonderful, for his father was a musician, from whom he knew music himself, and at a proper time we shall see how useful he was to LAWES in the original composition of *Comus*, and it will not be an offence, I humbly presume, to assert, though poets have written well who, according to the vulgar phrase, have not been able to turn a tune, that should, by accident, a musical mind be grafted on a poetical one the combined effect, emanating from the same ideas, must necessarily be more forcible than were it to result from the collision of two different minds however congenial; for it is infallible, that the musician must lose some of the furor of the poet, and the poet of the musician\*.

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\* I knew a musician of some eminence who, being engaged to compose music, like doers of periodical works, at so much per sheet, the words to be provided or written by his employer, and knowing the impossibility of finding correspondent expressions for the lines he had to set, for he might as well have composed a game of crambo, would constantly get the metre into his mind and invent a gavotte, or a jig, to suit it, and this must be done by a musician of real genius; but all the musical genius upon earth could not do this by words in their nature truly lyric; by the poetry for instance of MILTON or DRYDEN. The assistance here must be mutual, for the expression of the poetry points out the nature of the music requisite for its appropriate decoration, and the music gathers a strength and a beauty from the charms of the poetry that inspired it.

*Lycidas*, though a weak and, in some respects, an incongruous poem, such as probably cannot sustain a trial by the severe laws of criticism, has nevertheless many beauties; but I would not have the world so deceived as to imagine that the blemishes of this poem are its imagery, for what would be its merit, being lyric, if it had not imagery? I will not allow any writer to criticise lyric poetry who has not as SHAKESPEAR phrases it, "music in his soul," and this observation cannot be considered as illiberal since I accompany it with a declaration that a man need not be indispensibly a musician to possess this divine quality.

Critics, versed even to austerity in all the nice and discriminating rules by which the nature of poetry are squared and measured, have my free consent to examine an epic poem, a heroic poem, a didactic poem; but when good sense, that forbids in one instance, permits in another, when fancy is unbound and the mind wearied with instruction seeks for pleasure, it would be mortification instead of enjoyment not to encourage any latitude within the pale of consistency.

We are told that in *Lycidas* "there are no effusions of real passion, for that passion runs not

“ after remote allusions and obscure opinions;” to which is added, “ that where there is leisure for “ fiction there is little for grief.” What a blow is here aimed at the beauty of oriental poetry that has so long been the delight of the world.

Let us meet this critic half way; let us fairly admit that MILTON and his friend who was drowned were not shepherds; but does this prove that they did not admire the beauties of nature together? And if they did is it not very natural that the loss of those beauties should be deplored.

But it so happens that this allegory is only subservient to truth. Solitude is the abode of melancholy. In solitude, the shepherd or the poet if you will invokes his muse, which according to these strict injunctions ought to be forbidden too, for no muse literally comes to a poet's aid, or even hears him. He invokes her with sincerity, for he says

So may some gentle muse  
With lucky words favour my destined urn,  
And as he passes turn,  
And bid fair peace be to my fable shroud :

Now this is not only sincere but it is affecting, and has a great deal of the heart in it; but perhaps some cynic may insist, to shew what criticism is, that it is

void of feeling and full of self interest, for he only raises an urn to his friend that somebody may raise one to him.

If we permit this innovation, for if we did not we must cut up poetry, and particularly lyric poetry, by the roots, let us also give him leave, especially as it is a sweet and affecting sentiment, to say

For we were nursed upon the self same hill,  
Fed the same flock by fountain shade and rill,  
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared  
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,  
We drove a-field, and both together heard  
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft, till the star, that rose at evening bright,  
Towards heaven's descent had sloped his western wheel.

Here is a beautiful truth expressed by a figure, which figure adds innocence to friendship, and contemplation to sentiment. We know MILTON and his friend, as our critic says, never drove a-field, by the way the critic has left out the hyphen, and that they had no flocks to batten, but if they observed these beautiful objects from a window, or even if they made them the theme of their admiration in a chimney corner, the implied truth remains invincible, and the heart irresistably admits and partakes the real grief occasioned by the separation of two friends whose

minds were so well suited to receive and impart reciprocal delight and instruction.

So much for the critical defects of *Lycidas*. Its poetical errors are the errors of inexperience; but its beauties are in number and of magnitude enough infinitely to overcome both.

I have said so much on the subject of *Lycidas*, because one has naturally a greater pleasure to justify than to blame. In the *Allegro* and the *Penferoso* as there is nothing to blame so there is nothing to justify. The distinctions are uniformly appropriate, and the sentiments uniformly beautiful. The pleasure is gay, chearful, and winning, but neither thoughtless, trifling, or licentious. The melancholy is neither sour, sarcastic, or morose, but complacent, soothing, and moral.

HANDEL, who is every where unequal, except in *Acis and Galatea*, has set some passages of these poems wonderfully, and others most unworthily indeed. Perhaps, which appears to have been his fault every where, he has attempted at the effect without feeling the sentiment; but this will be placed in a better light hereafter. In the mean time, while some critics find melancholy in MILTON's mirth, and

others mirth in his melancholy, for that the *Allegro* begins with a deprecation of sadness rather than an innovation to cheerfulness, and *vice versa*, let us rest satisfied with tasting the beauties of two of the sweetest and most winning poems that ever graced English literature.

*Samson Agonistes*, which was altered into an oratorio by doctor MORELLE, into which HANDEL introduced some very good music, nay, the doubt is among his admirers, who knew best how to judge of its merits, whether this or *Judas Maccabeus* be his best oratorio, was not intended by MILTON for representation, nor indeed is it capable of it.

It is however the best calculated subject for an oratorio of any that has ever been treated; for, without any violence or impropriety it naturally mixes the holy and the profane, and VOLTAIRE has so well taken this advantage of it that he has not only well adapted it to the stage, but has rendered it a good vehicle for music, which MILTON never dreamt of; for, as he knew from the subject it could not with propriety be represented, he has written the whole in blank verse, making the ancients his model, and appearing fearful, lest this classical species of tragedy should be confounded with common interludes.

To say truth *Samfon* is not a tragedy but a morality, formed upon the principles of *ÆSCHYLUS*, *SOPHOCLES*, and *EURIPIDES*; to which species of tragedy *MILTON* is very solicitous that his readers should give the preference, though in his chorus, because he could not imitate them separately, for they separately disagreed, he has literally taken, as nearly as the opportunity would permit, the manner of all.

Though something primitive runs through every part of *MILTON*, yet it is wonderful that he, who knew the latitude and the liberality of the living as well as the dead languages, should seriously prefer the ancient tragedy with "its incumbrance of a chorus," as *JOHNSON* truly says, to the modern. The best authors find numberless difficulties in the way of making a tragedy natural; and, as every thing that appeals to the sense must be more perfect as it approaches to nature, so tragedy being nature represented, every extraneous and auxilliary introduction that does not strengthen the action, advance the interest, or facilitate the plot, is an impediment instead of an assistance, and therefore *MILTON*'s position in this must be radically wrong; but his learning was austere, and his prejudices were bigotry, and thus his objects were rather grandeur than greatness, his language rather beauty than passion.

On the merits of *Paradise Lost* I shall be very short. It is out of my province; and, if it were not, all observation is now needless. No book ever found the level of its own intrinsic fame so correctly as this; and, though we have been taught to deplore that it sold for a piteous sum, and that in spite of the exertions of DRYDEN, whose conduct upon this occasion must have been very amiable if MILTON thought him no poet, the arts of booksellers, and many other popular inducements, years elapsed before any impression of consequence was vended; yet nothing tells its own story so plain as the history of this work.

*Paradise Lost* was written in a style above common comprehension, and the learned alone knew its value. These are not always able, nor indeed willing to patronize literature; and therefore a book, which must be publicly taught before it can be publicly understood, must naturally make a very slow progress even towards notoriety; but, this attained, it requires still more to give it celebrity, which it cannot arrive at till it be both universally read and felt; and, as it happens that *Paradise Lost* cannot possibly be tasted by a twentieth part, perhaps a much larger proportion, of those who have either willingly or compulsively gone through it, its tardy



approach to general encouragement is very easily accounted for; and thus will this great, this wonderful, this divine poem, though now in all libraries, and indeed in all pockets, except the application of a few quotations, remain alone for ever, a delicious feast for men of strong genius and profound erudition.

Those who have not dared to hint their doubts as to the merit of *Paradise Lost*, for fear of betraying their ignorance, have, however, pretty well manifested it by their indiscriminate reprobation of *Paradise Regained*; which would have no place in any library could it with decency be expunged from the works of MILTON. It is not so powerful a poem by a great difference as the other, it has, however, many beauties; but, as these were not so plainly within the comprehension of general readers as the faults, they have chosen to declare that it contains no beauties at all; and thus while they fancy they do justice on MILTON by decrying his work, they blindly do justice on themselves by exposing their own folly to the world's derision.

I have now only to speak of *Comus*; a production which, as a drama, has been generally condemned, but highly commended as a piece of writing. I cannot see how a masque may be cri-

ticised by critical dramatic rules, being a species of entertainment in which the author is permitted to resort to supernatural agency and bring forward whatever may recreate and delight the fancy. A forcerer enters upon the watch to ensnare the innocent, a blameless woman betrayed into his power, and a protecting spirit who watches over her and averts her danger, are characters that serve to create an interest and secure it, and therefore nothing can be more perfectly dramatic taken in a general sense.

It has been objected to the story that it is not probable. "As far as the action is merely human," says doctor JOHNSON, "it ought to be reasonable, "which can hardly be said of the conduct of the "brothers; who, when their sister sinks with fatigue "in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their "way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadnesses and danger of solitude."

Now it so happens that, impossible as all this may appear, it is a fact; for it happened to lord BRACLY and Mr. EGERTON, sons of the earl of BRIDGEWATER, and their sister. They were passing through a place called Heywood Forest in HEREFORDSHIRE, and were benighted, and at length the lady was lost. This being told to the earl

on their arrival, after many difficulties, at Ludlow Castle, which was their residence, MILTON was requested to form the story into a masque. LAWES was employed to compose the music, who performed himself the attendant spirit\*.

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\* What we ought exactly to credit upon this head it is difficult to say. LAWES is in general supposed to have composed the music of *Comus*. It is said that in this task MILTON very materially assisted him; which he certainly might have done as he learnt music of his father; but we are also told that IVES as well as LAWES was concerned in it, and that they had each a hundred pounds for their trouble; by the way if this was the truth they paid a better price for music at that time than they do now, but we are given further to understand that four gentlemen of the king's band were also invited to assist at the representation; and, being set down previously to a collation where each had a covered plate laid for him, upon withdrawing the covers every man found forty pieces of gold "of their master's coin," says the historian, "for the first dish!" All this, however, seems to wear an air more of plausibility than truth; for there were but five songs originally in *Comus*, two of which, *Sweet Echo*, and *Sabrina Fair*, are undoubtedly the composition of LAWES. I think it more rational, either to put IVES out of the question, or to suppose that he was one of the gentlemen of the chapel, and that he assisted at the performance; for LAWES had certainly a great influence in the earl of BRIDGEWATER's family. He taught lady ALICE BERTON, and there is no doubt but that, having so fair an opportunity, he prevailed on MILTON to write the masque to favour his interest, for he was permitted to dedicate it to the young lord in his own name, and in the dedication he intimates that the author stands aloof, for he says that it is a legitimate offspring, although not openly acknowledged by its author. On this account I think it is very unlikely that he had any

*Comus*, as it was performed at Ludlow Castle, tells clearly and literally this history. Lord BRACLY, Mr. EGERTON and lady ALICE EGERTON, were actually the actors as well as the real persons to whom the disaster happened; and, after *Comus* is discomfitted, which is the fabled part of the work, or taking it literally after their danger and distress are past, which might have been effected by a common guide, they are introduced first to the inhabitants of the town of LUDLOW, who were naturally alarmed at their absence, and afterwards to their friends, so that, had the riot been that ill managed merriment, the lady originally suspected,

Such as the jocund flute or gamefome pipe  
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,

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associate at all; for he was suffered, as most musicians ridiculously are, to alter the author. Instead of the words

So may'st thou be translated to the skies,  
And give resounding grace to all heav'n's harmonies.

He facetiously made it, fidler like,

So may'st thou be transplanted to the skies,  
And hold a counterpoint to all heavens harmonies.

This may convince us that MILTON had not only a great deal of forbearance but was very accommodating; for it is not likely that he who made the pun could have written the dedication, and in this case LAWES seems to have been to MILTON what LULLY was to QUINAULT.

When for their teeming flocks, and granges full,  
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous PAN,  
And thank the gods amiss,

The situation would have been the same; for,  
says she,

I should be loath  
To meet the rudenefs, and swilled insolence  
Of such late wassailers; yet Oh where else  
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet,  
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood.

In short, consider it as an entertainment written for a private family, than which nothing at that time could be more common, it is fully answerable to every purpose; for the stage, it would have been too tame and destitute of variety; but, at any rate, it contains the first principle of all that wonderful subtilty of reason and reflection, so variously turned and transmuted in *Paradise Lost*.

I shall, therefore, leave *Comus* till we come to it in the state it was prepared by DALTON for the stage, principally out of MILTON; and embellished with the delicious music of ARNE, and only say, by way of an humble tribute of esteem to the memory of its author, that, while one celebrated writer says he cannot be brought to wish that "MILTON had been "a rhymers," which, heaven knows he was, and an

incomparable one, and another, "that he was great. "rather than useful," in his particular career the world has seen nothing like his poetry that has so proudly emulated the ancients, that the longer language endures the more he will be admired, that his talents were so commanding he wrote for posterity more than for the time he lived in, and that future ages, as they entwine the wreath of erudition, shall decorate it with the names of HOMER and MILTON.

COWLEY, a most singular and extraordinary writer, who produced a great deal to amuse the fancy and but little to fix the mind, claims a place here on account of his having written a pastoral called *Lowe's Riddle*, and a comedy under the title of *The Guardian*, and afterwards revived and called *The Cutler of Coleman Street*.

I shall not imitate an eminent biographer, who laments that he cannot ascertain whether COWLEY's father was a sectary or not, but adds very sagaciously that whatever he was, as he died before his son was born that son was necessarily brought up by his mother; on the contrary I shall take a review, a short one it must be, of his works, and more particularly those that fall regularly under my notice.

I look upon COWLEY to have been the reverse of SHAKESPEAR, for he destroyed a fervid and splendid genius by running it into every thing quaint and fantastic, instead of permitting it to indulge itself in simplicity and sublimity. Thus his ideas are mature in childhood, and childish in old age, for forty nine might be called so in COWLEY who exhausted his mind as some do their constitutions.

His fancy was perpetually upon the stretch, and he for ever shunned what should interest the heart for that which could only astonish the imagination; and yet, with tinsel, quaintness, and most tormenting expletives, we find him now and then a wonderful poet. He has been very properly styled the greatest of the metaphysical writers, and the grand service this has done mankind is, that, being the greatest he was necessarily the last; for the risk of soaring after him began to cool the fervour of his imitators, and they wondered to find that a pursuit after truth and nature, which was to be accomplished without any hazard, could captivate those minds with delight, which it had hitherto been their study to strike with astonishment.

Strained hyperboles, and unnatural fictions, pervade the works of COWLEY. They are full of

images, tinsel, conceits, and tropes. Whether he address a mistress, a god, or a passion, the object is likened to every thing in and out of nature. His muse professes all manner of trades and callings, and his mind is a complete museum of qualities, and yet when you do admire him he is greatly beautiful. See how he soars above PINDAR, and the next minute sinks and grovels in the bathos.

Begin the song and strike the living lyre :  
 Lo how the years to come, a numerous and well fitted quire,  
 All hand in hand do decently advance,  
 And to my song with smooth and equal measure dance  
 While the dance lasts, how long so'er it be,  
 My musick's voice shall bear it company,  
 Until all gentle notes be drowned  
 In the last trumpet's dreadful sound.

But stop my muse—  
 Hold thy pegasus closely in  
 Which does to rage begin—  
 'Tis an unruly and a hard mouthed horse—  
 'Twill no unskilful touch endure,  
 But flings writer, and reader too, that sits not sure

Is not this a madman first in a lucid interval, and afterwards in a paroxysm of frenzy. ADDISON, speaking of his poem called the *Mistress* says, “ ob-  
 “ serving the cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and  
 “ at the same time their power of producing love  
 “ in him, he considers them as burning glasses made



“ made of ice. Finding himself able to live in the  
 “ greatest extremities of love, he concludes the  
 “ torrid zone to the habitable.

See how COWLEY makes musicians of the elements, and fairly qualifies them to sing a glee in four parts. Speaking of order as it rose out of Chaos he says,

The ungoverned parts no correspondence knew ;  
 An artless war from thwarting motions grew,  
 'Till they to number and fixed rules were brought ;  
 Water, and air, he for the tenor chose,  
 Earth made the bass, the treble flame arose.

For hyberbole, MARTINUS SCRIBLERUS is a fool to COWLEY.

By every wind that comes this way,  
 Send me at least a sigh or two ;  
 Such and so many I'll repay  
 As shall themselves make winds to get to you.

But to have done with this sensible madman. Whatever excellence there may be found in the different parts of COWLEY, to whatever heights he may have arrived in his flights of fancy, whatever real gems may be hid among his foil stones and his tinsel, all our researches are curiosity without gratification, and toil without profit. His works are like a meteor burnt out, that astonished beholders with its glare while it lasted; but, its influence once over, it

has ever since remained the ruin of what it was, a dull opaque body, incapable of emitting fire, or reflecting light.

*Love's Riddle*, written when COWLEY was but fifteen, is a pastoral and has had the advantage, if it may be called so, of much indiscriminate praise, throughall which we see, however, that it was a very puerile performance. Doctor JOHNSON says it is of the pastoral kind "which," says he, "requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore, "being composed while the author was yet at school, "it adds little to the wonders of his minority." It must be noticed that COWLEY, like POPE, lisped in numbers.

The *Guardian*, which COWLEY says was neither written nor acted but rough drawn by him and repeated by the scholars, was fitted to the stage after a time under the name of *The Cutter of Coleman Street*; but it is surely a very poor play, and, if by this time its author had acquired an acquaintance with the living world, he has treated men and manners so clumsily that he might as well have kept to his fawns and his satyrs. It was very ill received, but his friends had adroitness enough to palliate his disgrace by asserting that the fall of the piece was owing to a mistaken notion that it was a party business.

So much for COWLEY, one of the most extraordinary genuifes, as they are called, this kingdom has produced ; but it should seem that his talent was fire and not genius ; and the greatest admirers of COWLEY must allow that whatever fervour, thought, conception, or other striking quality there may be in his works there cannot be found the faintest ray of solid immutable judgement.

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## CHAP V.

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WALLER, THE THREE KILLIGREWS, AND OTWAY.

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WALLER, who was the reverse of COWLEY, who so far from soaring scarcely crept, and whose muse, instead of imbibing the *aqua vitæ* of poetry was as insipid as that water which was his constant beverage, has a claim to be mentioned here on account of having brought on the stage, with alterations, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's play called *The Maid's Tragedy*.

I have no room here to shew in what manner WALLER contrived all his life to gain the favour of opposite interests; by what means he escaped punishment for having been concerned in a plot in favour of the king; how he managed always to be in parliament; how he made the pliable materials that had been acceptable to CHARLES the first, acceptable to CROMWELL, and afterwards to CHARLES the second; how he found means dastardly to desert his friends and patrons in distress, and to

possess their favour in prosperity ; these are above the arts of an ordinary man, but they are beneath the dignity of an honest one.

WALLER's famous answer to CHARLES the second, when he pointed out the disparity between the panegyric on CROMWELL and the congratulation on his restoration, that " Poets succeed better in " fiction than in truth," was as unworthy the poet as the man, and shews there was less art in the crime than in its justification. Poetry has nothing to do with literal fiction, it only employs figurative fiction to embellish literal truth.

Was this the part WALLER took upon this occasion ? No ; his conduct was base and venal. After speaking, writing, and acting, in defence of his injured king, while there was a chance of redress for him, in which case the poet would have reaped the reward of prostituted praise, for surely praise so attained is prostituted, the moment the royal influence began to droop, by means of colonel SCROOF, who had married his sister, and his own mother, who was related both to CROMWELL and to HAMPDEN, he attempted at conciliating the usurper's favour and succeeded. His favourable and dutiful sentiments towards his king were instantly lost and forgotten. He not only framed the panegyric in which he

tacitly justifies the destruction of the church, the murder of the king, and the tumult and oppression in which the nation were involved, but he followed up, not the effusion of a poet, but the dark, concerted, meditated design of a rebel to his country, by his poem on the war with SPAIN, in which he both attempts to induce the nation to offer the usurper the crown, and uses every possible insinuating argument to procure his acceptance of it\*.

He takes the moment when the nation is warm after the Spanish defeat and says,

Let the brave generals divide that bough,  
Our great Protector has such wreaths enough :  
His conquering head has no more room for bays :  
Then let it be as the glad nation prays ;  
Let the rich ore forthwith be melted down,  
And the state fixed by making him a crown :  
With ermine clad, and purple, let him hold  
A royal sceptre, made of Spanish gold.

The poetry of WALLER was greatly admired in its time, for it was innovation, introduced with fo

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\* This CROMWELL, from motives of policy, refused; but, to prove that his intention was to rule as a despotic monarch, he projected at this time his curious expedition against SPAIN in hopes to be enabled by foreign spoil, to establish his government in what form and upon what principle he might think proper, without having recourse to counsels or parliaments; and for this projected scheme he is said, absurdly enough without doubt, to have taken a hint from one of DAVENANT's plays.

much the more cunning as that it seemed to set up nature against art. The metaphysical poetry had wound up astonishment till the string cracked; and WALLER, to assume to himself an air of originality, hoped to get immortal fame by reconciling poetry to truth and nature; but, unfortunately, not having soul enough for the undertaking, he became very soon what the painters call a mannerist, and sat himself down contentedly under an idea that he had arrived to the utmost perfection in the imitation of nature, whereas he ought to have considered that nature is inimitable. In short, as COWLEY harmonized his numbers out of their melody, WALLER melodized his out of their harmony; and thus, by neglecting every thing nervous and spirited, his venal productions excepted, which are despised another way, he has left nothing behind him but an ingenious and elegant collection of lullabies.

The *Maid's Tragedy* was altered by WALLER from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, but had little success. He points out in the prologue how the audience may distinguish between his writing and that of the original authors.

In this old play, what's new we have expressed  
In rhiming verse, distinguished from the rest  
That as the Rhone its hasty way does make  
(Not mingling waters) through Geneva's lake  
So, having here the different styles in view.  
You may compare the former with the new.

This is enough to shew that it is a strange patch-work business, which it turned out, for it was soon withdrawn and has never been resumed.

WALLER also made some alterations, with the assistance of the earl of DORSET, in Mrs. PHILIPS's tragedy of *Pompey*; which, at the instance of lord ORRERY she had translated from CORNEILLE. The lady took offence at this and in revenge ridiculed WALLER's double rhimes, and it must be confessed successfully enough. Indeed these and others were points in which this poet might easily have been assailed. His numbers are smooth in general, though seldom musical, but his rhimes are weak, the expletive do frequently occurs, and there are many other radical objections to his poetry. Hyperbole may be vaped as well as poignant; labouring at trifles to make them important turns to dullness; in short, if COWLEY's muse was a coquette and a romp, WALLER's was a prude and full of mock modesty; and thus in different ways they equally disgust; one is bold, the other precise; one careless, volatile, and forward, attracts only a transient regard; the other conceited, self-sufficient, vain and hypocritical, soon experiences, in spite of the little regard she had attracted, cold neglect, and palling indifference.



During the reigns of CHARLES the first and CHARLES the second, flourished three KILLIGREWS, sons of sir ROBERT KILLIGREW, or KILLEGREW, all of them play-wrights, and in other respects men of some celebrity. Sir WILLIAM KILLIGREW, the elder brother, was a very conspicuous adherent of CHARLES the first. He was very early made governor of Pendennis Castle in Falmouth Haven, and put in command of the whole Western militia.

After this he was brought to court and placed immediately about the king's person, and he had the command of two troops of guards for the safety of his royal master during the war with the parliament. He became, however, an obscure character in the general troubles, and we know but little of him till CHARLES the second, anxious to shew attention to an old servant of his father, or as some say out of regard to his brother THOMAS, for CHARLES was not remarkable for gratitude, restored him to the post of gentleman usher of the privy chamber, which he had held under the late king, and afterwards created him the queen's vice chamberlain, which honourable situation he enjoyed twenty-two years, during which time the world are indebted to him, besides other literary productions, for five dramatic pieces.

Of these plays we do not find any very favourable mention, and indeed they seem to have been written more to employ leisure time than as claims to public favour; nay so humble was his opinion as to his merit that it was with difficulty he could be prevailed upon to publish one of his plays, called *The Imperial Tragedy*, and at last would not suffer his name to be affixed to it. As for the rest of his pieces which are *Pandora*, *Ormasdes*, *Selindra*, and *The Siege of Urbin*; These were all spoken well of by WALLER, STAPLETON, and CARLELS, and printed in 1666.

THOMAS KILLIGREW, commonly known by the name of king CHARLES's jester, produced ten plays. They were principally written for his amusement when he was abroad; and not, as it was generally imagined, in quality of manager of his own theatre, for it is pretty clear, as we have seen, that he never had one\*.

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\* Sir JOHN DENHAM's facetious copy of verses, on KILLIGREW's return from his embassy at VIENNA, comes up to pretty nearly a proof of this; for had his plays been written for the theatre the opportunity of being witty on it is so palpable that he could not have mistaken it. The lines are well known, but will nevertheless bear insertion.

Our resident TOM  
From VIENNA is come,  
And has left all the statesmen behind him;

The history of KILLIGREW, and that he followed CHARLES the second in exile, and returned with him, that he was groom of the bed chamber, and continued in high favour with the king, and had access to him when he denied himself to the first characters in the kingdom, is perfectly well drawn. He had such lively parts, and was a man of such eccentricity and peculiar humour that he was a perfect counterpart to CHARLES ; and, having been admitted to habits of freedom and familiarity during their residence abroad, he was suffered to go sometimes most unwarrantable lengths in the liberties he took, There is a story told that he came to the king dressed like a pilgrim ; and, being asked where he was going, he answered to fetch OLIVER CROMWELL from hell to take care of the affairs of the nation, for that his successor took no care at all of them.

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Talks at the same pitch  
Is as wise, and as rich,  
And just where you left him you'll find him.

But who says he's not  
A man of much plot,  
May repent of this false accusation ;  
Having plotted and penned  
Six plays, to attend  
On the farce of his negotiation.

This is not correct, for he wrote nine plays while he was abroad.

His plays seems not at all to have been performed, and some of them appear to have been brought out at fir WILLIAM DAVENANT's theatre, which completely discredits his having been manager of the king's company. The *Prisoners*, 1663, was a tragedy, but we know nothing of its success. On this play and *Claracilla*, a tragi-comedy, some commendatory verses are said to have been written by CARTWRIGHT, and others.

The *Princefs*, tragi-comedy, which was written at NAPLES, is a romantic thing and was taken from a traditional Neapolitan story. The *Pilgrim* was written at PARIS, but is very little calculated for representation. The *Parson's Wedding*. This comedy was certainly performed first in 1664, but whether by DAVENANT's company or KILLIGREW's we have no account; and now, to make amends for the want of women on the stage previous to the establishment of these companies, it was revived at the the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Field's, and performed entirely by women, with a new prologue and epilogue, spoken by Mrs. MARSHALL in men's cloaths.

By this play we pretty well get at KILLIGREW's real merit, which seems to have been no more than a general predilection for literature, and perhaps

dramatic literature in particular. The *Parson's Wedding*, with the help of the scissars and the paste pot, is little more than a mixture of *The Antiquary*, *Ram Alley*, *The English Rogue*, and other things which furnished the materials afterwards for *Woman's a Riddle*, a play which, as we shall see hereafter, BULLOCK and SAVAGE held a disputed right in; but which came, and indeed so did all the rest, from a Spanish play called *La Dama Duende*, which was translated by Mrs. PRICE, wife to one of the Barons of the Exchequer. It is a sprightly comedy, and when you have said that you have said all.

*Cecilia and Clorinda*, of which there is a first and second part, making two plays. These were written abroad, and one of them appears to have been performed at DAVENANT's theatre in 1664. *Thomazo, or the Wanderer*, is a comedy also in two parts, or rather two comedies on the same subject, one of these was performed, some say they were both. The plot is stolen from various things, one part of it in particular from JONSON's *Volpone*, and another from a poem of CAREW, which theft KILLIGREW acknowledges. These plays, together with two others on one subject called *Bellamira her Dream*, were all published in 1664.

Dr. HENRY KILLIGREW was a year younger

than his brother THOMAS. He got early into high preferment in the church, for at the age of thirty he had taken the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and was immediately appointed chaplain to the duke of YORK, and given a stall in Westminster Abbey. He was like his brothers, faithful to the Royal Family, and suffered with them; but, on the restoration he was made almoner to the duke of YORK, superintendant of his chapel, rector of Wheathamsted in HERTFORDSHIRE, and master of the Savoy, which place he retained fifty years.

As this is the only HENRY KILLIGREW of eminence that we know of at that time, it has been naturally conjectured that he was the patentee, but there is certainly no credible reason to be given for this surmise. It is true that he was a long time stationary and might have attended to any pursuit of that kind; but he would in such case probably have embellished his theatre with his writing, having given one very good specimen of his dramatic abilities, and again such an undertaking might have been considered as incompatible with the sanctity of his character.

The only play he produced was written at the age of seventeen, and it was considered as a very extraordinary effort. It was written for the enter-

tainment of the king and queen at York House, on the nuptials of lady MARY VILLIERS and lord CHARLES HERBERT, and was afterwards performed at Blackfriars, when it was highly extolled by all the wits, but particularly, says my author, by JONSON, but this happens to be impossible for JONSON died the year before.

*Cleander*, the principal character in the play is represented as seventeen years of age, and when a critic observed that it was a most ridiculous piece of absurdity for such a youth to express himself in language that became a man of thirty, adding that it was monstrous and impossible, Lord FALKLAND replied that nothing could be so absurd and ridiculous as the remark, for that, so far from being monstrous and impossible for one of seventeen to utter such sentiments, it was perfectly in nature, since the author wrote the whole play when he was no older. This play was afterwards published with many improvements, under the title of *Pallantus and Eudora*. I have already mentioned that this gentleman was father to the celebrated Miss ANNE KILLIGREW, who was esteemed as well for her virtues as for her poetry and painting.

We are now come to OTWAY, a weak and unfortunate man, and a great and extraordinary writer.

OTWAY, though liberally educated, seems to have been poor from his infancy. He early in life commenced actor and completely failed. It has been generally agreed that writing and acting depend upon different faculties. That person, demeanour, face, and voice, ought to be always at the command of an actor is beyond contradiction; and, when it so happens that an actor fails in these requisites it is clearly impossible that he can acquire reputation on the stage; but there is something also in mind, conception, and knowledge of nature and the heart; which, if an author manifests in his writings an actor is compelled to express.

It has been remarked, by way of setting the matter right, that the author has watched the heart, and the actor contemplated the face; but I cannot narrow the question to so thin a conclusion. Is it unnecessary then that an actor should feel and think? Is action and gesticulation all the requisites he has occasion for? Will any body venture to declare this who has seen GARRICK in Lear, or Hamlet, BARRY in Othello, SHUTE in the Miser, MACKLIN in Shylock, KING in Lord Ogleby, Mrs. CLIVE in the Widow Blackacre, or Mrs. SIDMONS in Mrs. Beverley, or the Grecian Daughter? For I don't



care whence the instances come so they are but strong and in nature.

Upon occasions like these, actors will sometimes give a force and a truth to a character beyond what the author himself had conceived, and I could name literal instances of it. Let it not then be credited that an actor is but a mere vehicle, a conveyance. Many that pass for actors indeed are but little more but the eminent requisites are strongly mental, and require a great deal that good authors have, and a great deal that they want; and it is upon this account that, while the stage has been inundated by authors for two hundred years, many of them men of great talents, the world has seen but one BETTERTON, and one GARRICK.

OTWAY was perpetually in all manner of distress and disquiet. His easiness of temper made him too kind, and his poverty too accommodating; and thus he was always wasting his wit for the amusement of wealthy fools, and accepting his reckoning by way of recompence. His companions were profligate men, such as would bring him into scrapes and there leave him. One of these my lord PLYMOUTH, an illegitimate son of CHARLES the second, procured him a cornet's commission and sent him into

FLANDERS; but he soon left the army and returned most miserably poor, and consequently deserted, till he brought out a play which afforded him a temporary supply.

It was at this time he was illiberally handled by ROCHESTER in his *Session of the Poets*; but he went on dissipating what he had, and striving to earn more, to follow the same game, in which he played a deep stake indeed; for he lost his health, his independancy, and his consequence; till, at length, before he had attained his thirty-fifth year, sunk into the most abject poverty, hunted by inexorable creditors, deserted by all the world, and loathsome to himself, he died, as we are told, by swallowing part of a roll which he was enabled to purchase by the casual charity of a person who met him and had known him in better days\*.

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\* Dr. JOHNSON with great propriety has taken some pains to ascertain the probability of this fact. He says he hopes it is not true, and that "there is ground of better hope from POPE, who "lived near enough to be informed, and who relates in SPENCER's "Memorials that ORWAY died of a fever he caught by a violent "pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends." For the sake of humanity let us admit this account rather than the other. It will not, however, wipe off the stain of his being deserted by those he had delighted in company, or those whose cause he had nobly defended from innate principles of zealous loyalty. But this is not to be wondered at for, at that time, the reward of loyalty was poverty and neglect.

If this be true what shall we say of the times in which he lived? He has been called the English RACINE\*, the poet of the heart, and the tender OTWAY; yet was WALLER for flattering a usurper and afterwards belying his principles, loaded with pensions and preferments; while OTWAY, who melted the heart, and refined into nature what the mathematical poets had squared by rules of art, was as poor as a beggar, and suffocated by an effusion of gratitude in return for an act of charity.

The dramatic pieces of OTWAY were produced in the following succession. *Alcibiades* 1675. This tragedy is said by some to have been taken from

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\* VOLTAIRE is extremely hurt that OTWAY should be compared to RACINE. He criticises the *Orphan*, holding up *Hamlet* as a parallel to it in the same way that PLUTARCH compares his heroes. But he is sure to attack a poet only where he may be hit. He says, "The *Orphan* is indecent, that the waggish part of the audience " have reason to expect that the marriage is to be consummated on " the stage, and that if the reader find any impropriety in this, it is " more than the author did, for with the same simplicity with which " he wrote the play, he dedicated it to the Duchess of CLEVELAND, " and congratulated her on having two illegitimate children by " CHARLES the second." But this, severe as it is in the eye of a superficial reader, is mere cavil. He dared not, as a genius and a scholar, to examine the beauties of OTWAY's language, for had he done so, he would have evidently shewn that they at least equal those of RACINE, and excel his own. But VOLTAIRE would at any time sooner give up his veracity than his jest.

CORNELIUS NEPOS, PLUTARCH, and others, and doctor JOHNSON regrets that LANGBAINÉ, whom he calls the great detector of plagiarism, has not discovered whether or not it is taken from the *Alcibiade* of PALAPRAN\*. There is no French tragedy called *Alcibiade*, except one written by CAMPISTRON, which came out ten years after OTWAY's play, and has evidently a smack of it; but it has also passages from *Thémistocle* by DE RYER, to which OTWAY, perhaps, first resorted. At any rate it was the first of his tragedies, and therefore the weakest.

*Don Carlos*, 1676, was OTWAY's second play. It was written in heroic verse, and the story is from a novel by St. REAL, which after all is taken from the *Spanish Chronicles*. It had very extraordinary success, and therefore provoked the illiberal lampoon from lord ROCHESTER, who, perhaps, while he abused OTWAY would have been content to have borrowed some of his money, which at any rate,

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\* What PALAPRAN? We have gone over PALAPRAT, the associate of BRUFFS; but, neither alone nor in conjunction with his friend, did he produce an *Alcibiade*; besides, if there is an *Alcibiade* of PALAPRAN, why could not the Doctor have the means of enquiring into the similitude as easily as LANGBAINÉ, who says after all that this play is certainly taken from PLUTARCH.

poor unfortunate man, he lavished away almost to as bad a purpose\*.

*Titus and Berenice*, 1677. This tragedy is said to have been a translation of RACINE's *Berenice*, which piece, as we have seen, was written by the command of LOUIS the fourteenth to compliment his sister, and which being severely handled by the critics was a considerable deduction from the poet's reputation; but it so happens that whenever RACINE is mentioned in this country CORNEILLE fades away before him, so much longer does style hold place in literature than genius. It should be remembered that CORNEILLE wrote a tragedy upon this subject as well as RACINE, and upon the same occasion; but, introducing truth where he was commanded to use flattery, his polite and politic rival triumphed over him†. Plays written upon particular

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\* BOOTH wrote a letter to AARON HILL wherein he says "Mr. BETTERTON observed to me many years ago, that Don Carlos succeeded much better than either *Venice Preserved*, or the *Orphan*, and was infinitely more applauded and better followed " for many years."

† If the reader will turn back to CORNEILLE, it will be found that all the world were at this time crying him down being old and holding up RACINE who was in the vigour of life. The Duke of MONTAUSIER, who, though a misanthrope, was tainted with this

occasions seldom succeed beyond the moment. OTWAY, therefore, was unfortunate in his choice; and, though he wisely turned to CORNEILLE's play more than to RACINE's, his success did not warrant the pains he took to obtain it. This play is in three acts and written in rhyme.

The *Cheats of Scapin*, which was brought out also in 1677, was perhaps intended as an after piece to be performed with *Titus and Berenice*. It is nothing more than a translation of MOLIERE's *Fourberies de Scapin*, of which the reader has seen a particular account. It was, however, a very pleasant farce and has been very often repeated highly to the satisfaction of the public.

*Friendship in Fashion*. Of the success of this comedy, which was produced in 1678, we know no more than through the report of two authors, one of whom says it was performed originally with the greatest applause, and the other that it was revived in 1749 and hissed off the stage for obscenity and immorality. It might have merit nevertheless, for these

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new taste, said to CORNEILLE, "Monsieur CORNFILLE, when I was young I wrote pretty verses. I am now old and my genius is extinguished. Believe me we had better leave the fushes of poetry to the fire of youth."

reports only prove, what every body knows, that the manners in the reign of CHARLES the second were profligate and of GEORGE the second rational.

*Caius Marius*, 1680, is the most insignificant of all OTWAY'S plays, and discovers, whatever may be his writing singly, that it shews to great disadvantage when placed by the writing of SHAKESPEAR. It had very little success.

We come now to consider the *Orphan*, a play which in spite of the many objections that lie against it, has always by its fascinating power kept constant hold on the stage and the public. It was produced in 1680. The story is taken from the History of BRANDON, in a novel called *English Adventures*. Many of the circumstances are strangely revolting, and the bully CHAMONT is a troublesome gentleman; and, as far as it relates to him, VOLTAIRE is right; but it should be remembered he never speaks of an author but where he is vulnerable\*. The distresses and calamities, being domestic, being

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\* "Among the rest," says VOLTAIRE, "there is a brother of this MONIMIA, a soldier of fortune, who because he and his sister are cherished and maintained by this worthy family, abuses them all round. Do me justice you old Put," says he to the father, "or damme I'll set your house on fire." "My dear boy," says the accommodating old gentleman, "you shall have justice."

sweetly and tenderly written, and appealing directly to the heart and the senses, while it can be well acted the *Orphan* must infallibly grace the theatre, and interest the public.

The circumstance of its being facetiously said that a farthing rush-light might have saved a great deal of mischief, is nonsense; for the same objection will lie against every plot. It has been said in the same manner, Why did not the Friar send ROMEO's letter to MANTUA by the post? And the answer to all this is that the plot ought not to be spoiled, nor the end of tragedy perverted.

The *Soldier's Fortune*, a comedy, was produced in 1681. It has a great deal of wit and pleasantry, and might be made into a good play, but for one insuperable objection, which is the looseness and licentiousness of its writing. This probably is the sole reason of its having been excluded from the stage since the profligate reign in which it first appeared.

It is taken from many things, and is a jumble of English, French and Italian materials, that have been separately borrowed and exchanged over and over



again. It was succeeded by a second part, or sequel, called *The Atheist*, part of which is taken from SCARRON'S novel called *The Invisible Mistress*. The same objection lies against both these plays. They are immoral and indecent, consequently when public manners began to refine, they were expelled the theatre.

With *Venice Preserved* I shall close OTWAY. This tragedy was produced in 1682, and has been always deservedly a favourite of the public. The writing is stronger and more sound than that of the *Orphan*, and it has the peculiar excellence of appealing so forcibly to the heart and the understanding that every body recollects it with pleasure. The character of PIERRE, notwithstanding it has been often urged that BELVIDERA is the only valuable personage in the play, is greatly and nobly drawn; and, however we may detest treason, or delight in its detection and punishment, his conduct is a solemn and sacred lesson held up to teach sovereigns to beware of returning public services with ingratitude. PIERRE was a greatly injured character, but he guiltily erred by his mode of redress, and was deservedly punished for his temerity.

The Abbe St. REAL, who by VOLTAIRE and

others has been considered as another SALLUST, from his *Histoire de la conjuration de Marquis de Bedemar*, furnished OTWAY with the subject for this play. The speech of RENAULT to the conspirators is translated word for word from this author; but he has so honoured St. REAL that the history is better known by the play than the play by the history\*. *Venice Preserved* was originally a very licentious play, but a great deal of the objectional matter has long been expunged; and, though it is not now properly cleared away, the play possesses very great merit, and plainly shews that, had not its

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\* VOLTAIRE here has indulged again his old spleen against OTWAY, by saying that he ought to have stuck more closely to his original, not chusing to remember, probably, that a play and a history are very different things, and that "after all *Manlius*, written "by de Fosse, is a better play than *Venice Preserved*." *Manlius* is certainly written upon the same subject but so far from its being a better play though it was said, as we have seen, that CORNEILLE might have been proud of it, the greatest merit of it consists of those scenes de Fosse has borrowed from OTWAY, who had been dead thirteen years before *Manlius* appeared. If VOLTAIRE had been just enough to have noticed that la PLACE, in 1746, produced a tragedy called *Venice Sauvée*, confessedly a translation from *Venice Preserved*, which had great success, and gave the French nation a very high opinion of OTWAY, it would have been more to his credit than perpetually blazoning the faults of a man and concealing his beauties, when he himself knew more easily how to imitate the first than the last.

unfortunate author been prematurely cut off, had he not been abridged of the advantages of moral example, both in the times in which he lived and the manners of those he conversed with, he would have been handed down to posterity as one of the most shining ornaments of English literature.

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## CHAP. VI.

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DENHAM, FLECKNOE, COCKAYNE, THE HOWARDS,  
LORD FALKLAND, SIR GEORGE ETHERIDGE, Mrs.  
PHILIPS, DUCKINGHAM, DUFFET, RYMER, AND  
SUCKLING.

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As I now count one hundred and thirty eight dramatic writers not yet mentioned, whose works were written before the revolution, it will be very proper in some way to clear them off, that the stage may be at leisure for DRYDEN and other authors of more eminence.

I shall begin with a few which I can dwell on with propriety as their names are deservedly held in esteem. Sir JOHN DENHAM, one of those who began to refine English poetry from the flights and hyperboles of COWLEY and his metaphysical adherents, merits a place any where to his celebration, but his title to notice in this work arises from his having written a tragedy called *The Sophy*. I shall

not, however, lose the pleasure this opportunity gives me of speaking further of him.

DENHAM, who as an author very gravely tells us, an Irishman probably, that being son to the lord chief baron of the exchequer in IRELAND, he was of course born in DUBLIN, maintained a conspicuous character in society. Being violently addicted to gaming his friends had very little hopes of his ever making any considerable figure notwithstanding every pains was taken with his education, and every advantage given him as to polite and elegant accomplishments; nor did they dream that such a spark lay under such a heap of rubbish, till all of a sudden he brought forward his tragedy of the *Sophy* at the age of twenty-seven.

WALLER upon this occasion said that DENHAM "broke out like the Irish rebellion, three  
"score thousand strong when nobody was aware or  
"at least suspected it." Soon after this he published *Cooper's Hill*, a poem that had so much merit as to  
"excite," says doctor JOHNSON, "the common  
"artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A re-  
"port was spread that the poem was not his own  
"but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty  
"pounds." The same attempt was made to rob

“ ADDISON of his *Cato*, and POPE of his *Essay on Criticism*.”

The finest traits in the character of DENHAM are those which describe him as a staunch, warm, and dutiful loyalist. The services he engaged in were full of difficulty and personal danger, yet he braved them to serve the injured king and his unfortunate family. He undertook to deliver a message from the queen to the king when he was in custody of the army, he raised ten thousand pounds for him among his Scottish subjects in POLAND, and he conveyed away JAMES, duke of YORK, from LONDON into FRANCE, and delivered him there to his mother and brother.

At the Restoration he was rewarded for his former services and grew into opulence, and he now indulged himself in his own proper sphere; to how good a purpose let his various productions shew which GARTE and POPE have imitated, and which gave a polish to DRYDEN.

The *Sophy* is built upon a story in HERBERT'S *Travels*, treated also by BARON, but as he and DENHAM pursued the subject differently each author has been assigned his separate merit, DENHAM, how-

ever, claims the right of originality, having written his play five years before BARON'S piece was produced. They were both successful.

FLECKNOE is a name which would now perhaps have been forgotten had not DRYDEN handed it down to posterity in a different way than the gentleman's own vanity perhaps induced him to think it intitled to. LANGBAINÉ whimsically says that his acquaintance with the nobility was more than with the Muses, and that he had a greater propensity to rhiming than a genius to poetry. He printed several plays but never could get but one performed, for which he himself gives different reasons. "Those," says he, "who have the governing of the stage, have their humours and must be entreated, and I have mine and won't entreat them, and were all dramatic writers of my mind they should wear their old plays thread bare before they should get any new ones till they better understood their own interest and how to distinguish between good and bad."

The only play of this author that was acted is a pastoral tragi-comedy. It was instantly damned, and FLECKNOE, a Jesuit himself, and following the jesuitical conduct of JONSON upon a like occasion,

fall upon the actors and the public for not doing him justice. His plays, *Loves Dominion*, "written as a pattern for the reformed stage," *Erminia*, *Desmoiselles ala Mode*, and *The Marriage of Oceanus and Britannia*, were never performed. He was determined, however, to be even with the actors, for he published the plays with their names placed opposite the characters, that so his readers might have the pleasure of fancying they saw them performed; which, to a lively imagination, he says, must convey as much pleasure as being present at the theatre.

Sir ASTON COCKAYNE, who knew polite literature, and encouraged it, who in common with many other gentlemen of liberal principles and abilities, suffered in the political storm that shipwrecked the fortunes of CHARLES the first, and returned to pass the latter part of his life in peace and serenity after the restoration, wrote four plays.

The *Obstinate Lady*, a tragedy, date 1657, is an imitation of MASSINGER's *Very Woman*, but it had no material success. *Trapoline supposed a Prince*, which the author had seen at VENICE, and therefore was induced to try his hand at it, is one of



those incongruous Italian pieces which we have already examined the style of. It is, however, very well calculated to excite laughter when the mind has been accommodating enough to admit its absurdities; and, as a proof of this, let me bring to the recollection of many visitors of the theatre how much they have laughed at the same piece, cut to a farce under the title of *Duke and no Duke*.

*A Masque for Twelfth Night*, was an occasional thing performed before PHILIP earl of CHESTERFIELD and his lady, in which their two sons represented the principal characters; which may shew that the CHESTERFIELDS had always an eye to the Graces, though the eldest of them, who afterwards so loudly inveighed against a nobleman's making himself a fidler, probably took the hint from his being forced so early in life, for no doubt it was against his will, to turn actor.

*Ovid's Tragedy* is another instance that COCKAYNE was infected with a love of the Italian theatre, a taste than which nothing can be more false, though there is always something that interests and amuses. Some of the circumstances are taken from a piece which BEAUMONT and FLETCHER have imitated in *King and no King*, and which seems to have

formed the ground work for the *Revenge*. HANNIBAL's inviting the dead carcass to sup with him is that revolting subject *Don John*, which we have been obliged to say too much of already.

Of the name of HOWARD we have three authors, EDWARD, JAMES, and sir ROBERT, all gentlemen of fortune and family, though it does not appear, whatever might have been said to the contrary, that they were related. There is nothing very particular mentioned of their fortunes; and, though they each of them wrote for the stage, except one hit, their works are very little known, I allude to *The Committee*, or *the Faithful Irishman*.

This comedy was written by sir ROBERT HOWARD, and succeeded very greatly on account of its being a play for the times, for it was intended to cast an odium on the Round Heads and their party, which certainly the absurd fanaticism, mixed with indecent pride, in Mr. and Mrs. DAY and ABEL has completely effected. The idea of TEAGUE was taken from his own servant who was sent to ENGLAND to release sir ROBERT's son from prison, where he was at the suit of government; and having succeeded, instead of going immediately to his master on his return to IRELAND, he staid a fort-

night to spread the news and get drunk among his friends for joy.

The remainder of the dramatic pieces written by this gentleman are called, *The Blind Lady*, *The Surprizal*, *The Vestal Virgin*, *The Indian Queen*, *The Great Favourite*, and *The Conquest of China by the Tartars*; none of which have any thing in them very remarkable, except the *Vestal Virgin*, which has two catastrophes; one ending happy, and the other tragical, so that the play may be performed either way according to the choice of the audience.

The plays written by EDWARD HOWARD are, *The Ufurper*, *Six Days Adventure*, *Woman's Conquest*, *Man of New Market*, *The Change of Crowns*, *The London Gentleman*, and the *United Kingdom*, none of which we learn much of, and some of them were never printed. *Six Days Adventure* seems to have had some merit, for it excited lord ROCHESTER's envy and ill nature; two qualities very irritable in this sarcastic humourist.

JAMES HOWARD wrote *All Mislaken*, *The English Monsieur*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The first of these is a comedy, and may be found in DODSLEY's collection of old Plays. It has a great

deal of sprightlinefs, and shews indeed that he was the best dramatic author of the three, though he has written less than the others. The second has merit, but it has plenty of defects, and is that very comedy that the duke of BUCKINGHAM ridiculed in the *Rehearsal*, in the circumstance of prince VOLSIUS and the single boot. In the third, this gentleman tried the effect of his name-sake's experiment, for he altered *Romeo and Juliet* so as to make it end happily, and by this expedient DAVENANT gave it a run, representing it according to SHAKESPEARE and according to HOWARD alternately.

LORD FALKLAND was an amateur rather than a writer, but his spirit and inclination to protect and patronize genius have made him the theme of many a poet's sincere panegyric. He is entitled to a place here having written one play which was called *The Marriage Night*, and which is said to have contained a great share of wit and satire. There is but one opinion of this amiable and benevolent nobleman, and the truest test of his virtues is that he was regretted after his death by many who felt the good effects of his bounty when living.

There is nothing that distinguishes the life of sir GEORGE ETHERIDGE from the other men of plea-

ture in his time, except that, though he was as fond of the same pursuits, he had more principle. We see no gross violation of honour, no shameless impiety in him; for, in his freest moments of levity, there was an elegance of sentiment, and his conduct was always gallantry but rarely libertinism. His works are dangerous, for they are full of licentiousness; and, though his images are true, they are too lively and glowing, particularly for either the ear or the eye of young females; therefore his comedies, which are in other respects well written and a strong picture of elegant life, have long disappeared from the stage.

The *Comical Revenge*, *She Would if She Could*, and *The Man of Mode*, are the titles of his plays; and, except that the first is written partly in heroic verse, an examination of one would serve for all. They are lively and engaging, and exhibit a faithful picture of nature; but it is nature in her loosest attire, and when none love to court her but the licentious. SHADWELL speaks highly of *She Would if She Could*, though DENNIS says it was barbarously treated by the audience. *The Man of Mode* is certainly the best play; in which the characters of DORIMANT and sir FOPLING FLUTTER are masterly drawn, and highly coloured; but the objection

of indecency and indecorum applies to this play as well as the others, a circumstance highly in favour of CIBBER, whose fine gentleman and fops are well finished copies from the paintings of ETHERIDGE.

Mrs. PHILIPS, or, according to the title of her poems, "the most deservedly admired Mrs. CATHERINE PHILIPS, the matchless ORINDA," wrote two tragedies called *Pompey*, and *Horace*. There is nothing so easy as for ladies to acquire the possession of a little negative fame who are flattered into an idea that they can write. As for those whose minds are so male that they might as well be male in every other respect, that decide upon the rights of nations and mankind, and pertinaciously obtrude themselves into a province for which they cannot be qualified either by nature or education, one readily pities them exactly as one commiserates any other description of the insane\*; but when it

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\* Doctor JOHNSON, who was an admirable lurcher at watching for an opportunity to revenge himself, had been long an admirer of Mrs MACAULEY; but finding her get almost as dogmatic as himself, and seeing plainly that he might dine with her to all eternity without being able to convince her, was determined to cut her up at once by lowering her pride completely; for which purpose he one day artfully drew her into conversation upon her favourite topic the rights of man, in which were of course included liberty and equality. In proportion as she expatiated so he appeared to become her profelyte;

goes no further than a few fond utopian notions, such as celibacy, or platonic tenderness, especially when the characters are pretty notorious, one smiles and permits the dear creatures to flatter themselves and be flattered by others into an empty fame, to the great disorder of their families and the total neglect of the shirts and stockings.

As to the lady in question, she seems to have been in circumstances beyond the general run of lady writers, and therefore, as she had nothing else to do, there was no more good or harm in her stuffing her head full of her own poetry than the poetry of other people. Her most celebrated work, however, is in prose, and consists of a series of letters she wrote to sir CHARLES COTTEREL, under the title of *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus*, and we are commanded to believe, though the friendship of those letters is something warmer than the love of people in general, that "they are an intercourse between two persons of different sexes managed with delight and innocence," to which I shall only say that if the husband was satisfied nobody else had a right to complain.

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till at last, feigning to be worked into a proper pitch, "madam", said "he, you are perfectly right, I am your convert, all mankind ought to be equal. John set down to dinner with us."

The two tragedies by Mrs. PHILIPS are translations from CORNEILLE. *Horace* was left unfinished and afterwards supplied with a fifth act by sir JOHN DENHAM. It was performed by persons of quality at court with a prologue spoken by the duke of Monmouth. COTTON had translated the same play six years before, which induced the world to believe that Mrs. PHILIPS had taken advantage of his play; but the fact is, they were both very nearly from the French, and CORNEILLE, if not injured, would look well in any language. As to *Pompee* I have already shewn that it begat a sparring match between this lady and Mr. WALLER; and, as all the world of gallantry at that time swore and maintained that the Lesbian SAPHO, and the Roman SULPITIA were nothing to Mrs. PHILIPS, the double rhimes of poor WALLER were of course decried to nothing, and the double entendres of the lady extolled to the skies.

GEORGE VILLIERS, duke of Buckingham, was son to that famous statesman and favourite of CHARLES the first, who too fatally inspired his master with the weakness of JAMES, and who, in return, lost his life by the hands of FELTON. The character of BUCKINGHAM, of whom we are speaking, was exactly similar to all those men of



distinction about CHARLES the second; who, in compliance with the follies and vices of that weak and profligate monarch, threw a veil of French licentiousness over that splendour of English talents which would otherwise have adorned this reign of unavailing merit and perverted genius.

CHARLES the second, unfortunately for the kingdom, drew in French folly with his milk. The bulk of his adherents, who were his followers in his distress, and his companions in his exile, by the example of their principal, perfected themselves in those principles most congenial to his wishes upon the spot where such an education was practically taught. In consequence of this they all returned to ENGLAND accomplished French courtiers, and hence arose the superficial taste and unprincipled levity that eclipsed every thing meritorious, and ridiculed every thing honourable.

This BUCKINGHAM did his utmost, to say the truth of him, to connive at. He was a weak, irresolute, unprincipled man; but the strongest mark of his character was ingratitude, particularly to the king, against whom he was for ever studying every sort of mischief. In short, he lived in miserable splendour, an object of torment and vexation to

himself and every body else, and died, like ROCHESTER, and indeed most unprincipled characters, afraid of his conscience.

BUCKINGHAM wrote, as all the world knows, the famous burlesque comedy called the *Rehearsal*; a piece in its way that never was equaled. Its drift was by no means unfair, though he gave himself a licence which he sometimes made an improper use of. Bombast and fustian in heroic rhyme were certainly fair objects for satire, but it was the affectation of the reigning taste, the origin of which I have just shewn, that created this perversion of talents, and it would have been wiser to have reformed it altogether than to have ridiculed men who could not have dined had they not prostituted their merit.

DUFFET was a kind of stage adventurer, who, fancying he had a turn for dramatic poetry, and finding his works generally hissed into oblivion, determined to take some other course to induce a good reception of his pieces. That which he hit on was ingenious enough, and seems to have been the ground work of a similar expedient afterwards practised with great success in France. In short, DUFFET, finding it impossible to write any thing he

did not expose to ridicule, thought it less mortifying to ridicule the productions of others, and thus as fast as a piece made its appearance at the Duke's theatre, he parodied it at the King's. His own plays which scarcely deserve notice were called *The Spanish Rogue*, *The Empress of Morocco*, and *Beauty's Triumph*. The rest were written to ridicule other authors, and, to shew what an appropriate choice he made, the whole force of his satire is levelled at SHAKESPEAR and SHADWELL.

RYMER, whose character as a critic is differently drawn, who by some is thought to have written on the productions of authors with truth, discernment, candour, and discrimination, but by many more with asperity, ignorance, envy, and malignity, wrote one bad tragedy called *Edgar*.

SUCKLING, a perfect gentleman, who, by the advantages of birth, person, education, genius, and fortune, would probably have arrived to considerable eminence as a literary character had not death untimely cut him off at the age of twenty-eight, wrote four plays himself, and patronized many others.

His plays are published together with his poems, speeches, tracts and letters; and by these it is very

easy to discern that he had strong genius and much poetical grace, which would have matured his labours probably, had he lived into something more accomplished; but there is evidently every where marks of youth and inexperience, although WALLER certainly had him in view, for what was study and art in WALLER, was ease and nature in SUCKLING.

The first of SUCKLING's plays was called *The Discontented Colonel*, but in that state it was only a sketch of what he afterwards enlarged into a tragedy called *Brenoralt*. *The Goblins*, 1646, which DOWSLEY has published in his collection, has some very strong traits of merit. SUCKLING seems to have had a variety of things in his head when he conceived the plot, and he has not at any time lost sight of the *Tempest*; but it cannot be said in any part to be so much plagiary as a general imitation of the same sort of style, and this only in the characters; for there is a novelty in the incidents that might be rendered very pleasing.

*Algicora*, 1646, seems to have been imitated by HOWARD in his *Vestal Virgin*; not as to the subject but on account of its having a happy and a tragic catastrophe. *The Sad One* was left unfinished,

but it is a sketch in which may be seen a good deal of the master. *Brenoralt* was his last but it has not the greatest merit, and, upon the whole, the *Goblins* is the best play. To that I refer those who cannot readily get at his whole works, in which will be found if not great perfection at least great promise, and it is very much to be regretted the world lost so early in life a genius so likely to contribute to its pleasure, and a man so qualified to embellish its society.

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## CHAP VII.

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DUKE AND DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE, CARELL,  
HAUSTED, GLAPTHORNE, CAREW, AND OTHER  
WRITERS TO THE NUMBER OF MORE THAN A  
HUNDRED AND TWENTY.

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As so many dramatic authors yet remain to be mentioned who disappeared before the Revolution, my account of them must necessarily be very brief, and indeed it would be an intrusion on the reader were it otherwise, for it should seem that every thing that was brought to the theatres, good and bad, was instantly produced, and therefore a great deal of it was of course insufferable trash. To say truth, it is less a matter of astonishment than curiosity that out of nearly five hundred dramatic pieces which were written by various authors in something more than thirty years, except a very few, perhaps ten, and those in an altered state, the stage is a total stranger to the whole catalogue.

WILLIAM CAVENDISH, duke of Newcastle, whose remarkable attachment to JAMES the first, CHARLES the first and CHARLES the second, for which he obtained his titles and honours, outwent all their other adherents, who with astonishing equanimity of temper sustained many extraordinary vicissitudes of fortune, and who among other proofs of his merit was highly gifted and elegantly accomplished, wrote four comedies, which were called *The Country Captain*, *Variety*, *The Triumphant Widow*, and *The Humourous Lovers*. These plays have been a good deal extolled; perhaps because the author was a duke. They are passable, and no doubt he who wrote them held them in no better esteem; for poetry, though he was a noble patron and strongly encouraged and promoted the interest of literature, never so obtruded itself as to disturb his public occupations. *The Triumphant Widow* had good materials, and so perfectly was SHADWELL of his mind, that many parts of his *Bury Fair* are literally transcribed from it.

If the Duke, however, did not let poetry improperly engross his time, the Duchess to be even with him submitted to hardly any other occupation. She married the Duke, then Marquis of Newcastle, when they were both in exile. They re-

turned together after completely conquering their troubles, and lived in the greatest harmony and comfort many years. Her plays are in number twenty-seven, all which are extant, and some of them not without merit; but they are in so indigested a state, some being sketches, others not divided into acts, and in many other respects so unfit for representation, that as they do not seem to have been intended for the stage, or to have appeared on it, so it is perfectly certain they never will be represented except in parts as Mrs. DYE says, "at second hand."

The titles of these plays, if they may be so called, are *Love's Adventures*, two parts, *The Several Wits*, *Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet*, two parts, *The Lady's Contemplation*, two parts, *The Wit's Cabal*, two parts, *The Unnatural Tragedy*, *The Public Wooing*, *Matrimonial Troubles*, two parts, *Nature's three Daughters*, *Beauty, Love, and Wit*, two parts, *The Religious*, *The Comical Task*, *Bell in Campo*, two parts, *The Apocryphal Ladies*, *The Female Academy*, *The Convent of Pleasure*, *The Sociable Companions*, *The Preface*, *The Bridals*, and *The Blazing World*, two parts.

CARELL who, that he might resemble most of  
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the favourites of CHARLES the second, was a complete courtier and an indifferent writer, produced seven plays which, we are told, were acted with considerable applause, their titles were *The Deserving Favourite*, *Avirigus* and *Phileda*, *The Passionate Lover*, *The Fool Would be a Favourite*, *Osmond the Great Turk*, *Heracitus*, and the *Spartan Ladies*. The applause these plays received was from the king and the court, before whom they were acted privately. They are chiefly translations from other authors, and *Haracitus* is a translation from CORNEILLE.

HAUSTED was a cotemporary and boon-companion of RANDOLPH. He wrote two dramatic pieces called *The Rival Friends*, and *Senile Odium*, which met with very little success though historians, and particularly LANGBAIN and WOOD, give this author the character of a good poet.

GLAPTHORNE, whom WINSTANLEY calls one of the chiefest poets in the reign of CHARLES the first, has left nothing to be remembered by but five plays, for, though he wrote nine, four of them were never printed. The titles of these plays are *Argalus and Parthenia*, *Albertus Wallenstein*, *The Ladies Privilege*, *The Hollander*, *Wit in a Constable*, *The*

*Parricide*, *The Vestal*, *The Noble Trial*, and the *Duchefs of Fernandina*. The materials for these plays were supplied from sir PHILIP SIDNEY'S *Arcadia* and other things, but they were short lived, and are now forgotten.

CAREW was a celebrated wit in the reign of CHARLES the first, and wrote at his express command, a masque called *Cælum Britannicum*. The music of this masque was composed by HENRY LAWES, and the decorations were invented by INIGO JONES. DAVENPORT, of whose private character we know nothing, wrote *A new Trick to Cheat the Devil*, *King John*, and *Matilda*, *The City Night Cap*, *The Pedlar*, *The Pirate*, *The Fatal Brothers*, *The Polite Queen*, and *The Woman's Mistaken*. the first three were printed. They are taken from OVID, BOCCACE, and other writers, and two of them are in part retailed in RAVENSCROFT'S *London Cuckolds*.

Baron who wrote two dramatic pieces, and to whom, but I believe without the least truth, are attributed four more and several interludes, was conversant with men of talents, and particularly intimate with the celebrated HOWELL, who the reader may remember was a great traveller, and among whose letters

one epistle is addressed to this author. His pieces are called *Deorum Dona*, *Gripus* and *Hegio*, and *Mirza*. Those that are attributed to him are *Dick Scorner*, *Don Quixote*, *Destruction of Jerusalem*, and *Marriage of Wit and Science*. They were none of them ever acted.

PEAPS. It is not certain that any such author ever lived, or if he lived, whether he wrote a play. There is a play, however, called *Love in an Extacy*, with this name to it, and the only extraordinary circumstance relative to it is that it has cost more controversy about it than the play is worth. Cox had very slender pretensions to be considered as an author, his whole merit having consisted of taking diverting circumstances from various plays and forming them into farces and drolls; which, being a good actor, he was well qualified to do. This patched work business is not of sufficient importance to merit the reader's attention, and, therefore, I shall dismiss it without enumerating the titles of this mass of mummery, a much larger catalogue of which were printed by KIRKMAN after the Restoration.

I shall now get on with my catalogue of authors who, though not all dramatic hounds that hunted,

made a part of those that filled up the cry. MABBE translated *The Spanish Bawd*, RUGGLES wrote *Ignoramus*, GOFFE, who we are told was a clergyman, a perfect Socrates, and had a Xantippe for a wife, wrote *The Raging Turk*, *The Courageous Turk*, *Orestes*, and *The Careless Shepherdess*. These plays were only performed by scholars at the University. They are full of bombastic rant. A character says in a florin to the meteors that surround him, "Why do ye put on periwigs of fire?" KNEVET wrote a piece called *Rhonon and Iris*.

FLETCHER produced one drama called *Sicclides*. DREW we know nothing of, except upon the books of the Stationer's Company where there is his name as the author of two pieces called *The Life of the Duchess of Suffolk*, and *The Woman's Mistaken*. MARMION did not live in the same obscurity; for one of his plays, *The Antiquary*, is published in DODSLEY'S collection, and he wrote three others with some reputation. Their titles are *Holland's Leaguer*, *The Fine Companion* and *The Crafty Merchant*. GOMERSALL was a clergyman and wrote *Lodowick Sforza, Duke of Milan*. FISHER wrote *Fuimus Troas*, published by DODSLEY. JONES wrote a miserable piece called *Adrasia*.

NABBES was considered a fifth rate poet by

CIBBER, whose determination was pretty right for he wrote eight plays, which, except one, are forgotten. Their titles are *Microcosmus*, preserved in DODSLEY's collection, *Hannibal and Scipio*, *Covent Garden*, *Spring's Glory*, *Entertainment on the Prince's Birth Day*, *Tottenham Court*, *Unfortunate Mother*, and *The Bride*. RUTTER wrote *The Shepherd's Holiday*, and translated the *Cid*. SAMSON wrote *The Vow Breaker*, and *The Woman's Prize*, on which, applicable as the titles might be, he did not allude to SAMSON of old, discovering his strength to DALILA, or her delivering him up to the Philistines. JAQUES wrote the *The Queen of Corsica*. SPEED, the son of the chronologer, wrote a piece called *Stonehenge*. WILDER, a dissenting priest, wrote a piece called *The Bonfire*. KIRKE wrote *The Seven Champions of Christendom*.

HENRY SHIRLEY wrote *The Martyred Soldier*, *The Duke of Lerma*, *The Duke of Guise*, *The Dumb Bawd*, and *Giuldo the Constant Lover*. Only the first of these pieces was printed. CARTWRIGHT, who manifested very extraordinary talents, and whose premature death deprived the world of much pleasure and improvement, for he, like sir JOHN SUCKLING, died at eight and twenty, wrote *The Royal Slave*, *The Lady Erant*, *The Ordinary*, which last may be found in DODSLEY's collection, and has

considerable merit, and *The Siege*. His plays, poems, and other literary productions were held in such esteem that they were ushered into the world by fifty-two copies of commendatory verses. LOWER, was a great admirer of the French authors, and in imitation of them, wrote *Phœnix in Flames*, *Polyeuctes*, *Horatius*, *The Enchanted Lovers*, *Noble Ingratitude*, *Amorous Phantasm*. MAYNE wrote *The City Match*, a very good play amongst DODSDEN'S collection, and *Amorous War*.

BERKELEY wrote *The Lost Lady*. RAWLINS, who was rich, and wrote merely for pleasure, produced *Rebellion*, *Tom Effence*, and *Tunbridge Wells*. GOUGH wrote a piece called *The Strange Discovery*. SADDLER, who was a learned man, and in high church preferment, wrote a masque called *The Subject's Joy for the King's Restoration*. CHAMBERLAIN. There are two authors of this name. One wrote *The Swaggering Damsel*, and the other *Love's Victory*, the title of which was changed to, *Wit Led by the Nose*. SHARP wrote a play called *The Noble Stranger*. TATHAM, City Poet to CHARLES the first, wrote *Love Crowns the End*, *The Distracted State*, *Scot's Vagaries* and *The Rump*. HABINGTON wrote a tragedy called *The Queen of Arragon*, BRAITHWAITE, *Mercurius Britannicus*, and *Regicidium*;

RHODES brought out a piece called *Flora's Vagaries*; and RICHARD wrote a play called *Massalina, or the Roman Empress*.

BUCKHEAD wrote a play on the subject of the Irish Rebellion, called *Cola's Fury*. BURROUGHS had a play entered on the Stationer's books in 1646, called *Fatal Friendship*. Sir RICHARD FANSHAW, who attached himself very firmly to CHARLES the first, and watched the fortune of CHARLES the second with zeal and fidelity, returned with him to ENGLAND, conducted his marriage with the INFANTA of PORTUGAL, and afterwards rendered himself very useful to his master's affairs in SPAIN, where he died, wrote, or rather translated *Il Pastor Fido*, *Querer per solo querer*, *Fiestas de Aranjuez* and *The Faithful Shepherds*. It does not appear, however, that any of these pieces were performed. SHEPPARD wrote a party play called *The Committee-Man Curried*. NEEDHAM also wrote a party play called *The Levellers Levelled*. SHERBURNE was a good soldier and faithful to the royal party. He produced three tragedies called *Medea*, *Troas*, and *Phœdra and Hyppolitus*.

QUARLES, "who," says LANGDAINE, "mixed religion and fancy together, and never offended

“against his duty to GOD, his neighbour, or himself,” wrote, according to the same panegyrist, an innocent inoffensive play called *The Virgin Widow*. WASE was a schoolmaster, and by way of keeping up his Greek translated *Electra* from SOPHOCLES. MANUCHE was an Italian, and had a commission under Prince RUPERT, and, getting acquainted with HART, grew fond of the drama and wrote three plays called *The First General*, *The Loyal Lovers*, and *The Bastard*. PRESTWICH wrote a tragedy called *Hypollitus*. WILLIAMS produced a kind of pastoral called *Africa*. GEEFFRY was the author of a play called *The Bugbears*. GOLDSMITH imitated from *Hugo Grotius* a kind of sacred drama called *Sophompancas*. WILSON, a strange irresolute character, who wrote the life of JAMES the first in a way not very favourable to that monarch, was the author of *The Switzer*, *The Corporal*, and *The Inconstant Lady*.

HEMMINGS, son of HEMMINGS the actor, wrote two plays which are tolerably well spoken of. They are called *The Fatal Contract*, and *The Jews Tragedy*. FORMIDO. Under this name a play was entered at Stationer's Hall called *The Governor*. DR. MEAD, not the famous physician of that name who wrote on poisons, but one whose medicines were



perfectly inoffensive if they were of a piece with his play, wrote a comedy called *The Combat of Love and Friendship*. HOWELL, the great traveller and linguist, was author of a masque called *Nuptials of Peleus and Thetis*. ALEXANDER BROME, a lawyer, and the publisher of the plays of BROME, JONSON's pupil, laid claim to a play himself called *The Cunning Lovers*. RIDER is known by having written a play called *The Twins*, Dr. STRODE, an eminent preacher, wrote *The Floating Island*. FREEMAN who, to avoid the troubles in the reign of CHARLES the first, concealed himself in retirement, wrote a play by way of amusing himself, for we have never heard that it amused any body else, called *Imperiale*. STANLEY translated *The Clouds* from ARISTOPHANES. D'OUVILLY is set down as the author of a play called *The False Favourite Disgraced*. MERITON who has been censured by LANGBAIN as the dullest of all authors that ever were, or ever shall be, and convicted of not understanding his own writings, has left two contemptible plays to be remembered by. They are called *Love and War*, and *The Wandering Lovers*. SWINHOE, an indifferent writer, produced one play called *The Unhappy Fair Irene*.

LOVELACE was a good subject and soldier, but

his services were ill requited, and he died poor and neglected. He wrote two plays, the titles of which might justly speak his own eulogium. They are called *The Scholar* and *The Soldier*. NEVILLE wrote a party thing called *Shuffling, Cutting, and Dealing, in a Game of Piquet, being acted from the Year 1653 to 1658, by Oliver Protector and others*. FORDE produced a piece called *Love's Labyrinth*. PORDAGE, a man of no note, is said to be the author of *The Troades, Herold and Mariamne*, and *The Suge of Babylon*. DANCER translated from TASSO, CORNEILLE, and QUINAULT, *Aminta Nicomede*, and *Agrippa*. SADLER, not the same already mentioned, was author of a strange farago called *Masquerade du Ciel*. Sir ROBERT le GREEVE wrote a play called *Nothing Impossible to Love*. FOUNTAIN, a private gentleman, wrote a play for his amusement, called *The Rewards of Virtue*, which SHADWELL brought forward with great success under the title of *The Royal Shepherds*.

HEAD, who was sometimes an author, and sometimes a bookseller, and who at last was cast away near the Isle of Wight, where he had intended to take refuge from his creditors, wrote an execrable piece called *Ille et Ubique*. Sir ROBERT STAPLETON, who adhered to the royal cause, and lived com-

fortably after the Restoration, wrote the *Slighted Maid*, *The Step Mother*, and *Hero and Leander*. PORTER, a major in the royal army, and another associate of HART and MOHUN, produced *The Villain*, and *The Carnival*. GREENE wrote the *Politician Cheated*. Sir SAMUEL TUKE, an active officer for CHARLES the first, was author of a play of some merit, which may be seen in DODSLEY's collection. It is called *The Adventures of Five Hours*. HOLDEN, an obscure author, wrote a play called *The Ghosts*.

HOOLE, a learned author, but not conspicuous in life, translated all the plays of TERENCE. BULLTREL, who was private secretary of lord CLARENDON, wrote a play called *Amorous Orontus*. CARPENTER, "who," says WOOD, "was a fantastical man and changed his mind with his cloaths, and that for his juggles and tricks, in matters of religion, was esteemed a theological mountebank," produced *The Pragmatical Jesuit, new Leavened*. Lord BRISTOL, who led a life of perfect contradiction, who, as WALPOLE says, wrote against Popery and embraced it, who, in prosecuting lord STRAFFORD was converted, and who unconsciously was a prosecutor of lord CLARENDON, who was brave and unsuccessful, and, who to keep up his excentricity, to

day inveighed against the stage and to-morrow wrote for it, has left a play called *Elvira*. DOWER, a poor unfortunate Grub-street author, with decent abilities, produced a play which was, nevertheless, bad enough, called *The Salopian Squire*.

CARYL brought out *The English Princess*, a tragedy, and *Sir Solomon*, a comedy, 1671, which last was a translation from MOLIERE'S *Ecole de Femmes*. This must have been early in life, for it is the same CARYL who recommended to POPE the subject of the *Rape of the Lock*. He died in 1717, at which time he must have been a very old man. WESTON wrote a play called *The Amazonian Queen*. BAILEY, a barrister, wrote *The Spightful Sister*. ST. SERFE, who in quality of a spy ran great personal risk in the wars of CHARLES the first, published a play called *Tarugo's Wiles*, which is well spoken of by LANGBAIN, and complimented in verse by lord DORSET. MEDBURN, an actor, who was concerned in the plot of TITUS OATES, and who died in Newgate, translated MOLIERE'S *Tartuffe*.

BOOTHBY produced a play called *Marcellia*; and STROUDE wrote a play called *All Plot, or the Disguises*. These two writers are scarcely known. COTTON however, who follows, is pretty celebrated.

Every body knows his famous *Trovesfic*, and his *Wonders of the Peak*. In this last poem he too indulged his vein for ridicule, which in him was irresistible, that he lost four hundred a year by an old aunt whose peculiarities he thought proper to expose. He was a very companionable character, and therefore of course his acquaintance was courted\*. His title to notice here arises from his having translated CORNEILLE's *Horace*. JOYNER, a man very much beloved by his private friends, perhaps better than by the Muses, wrote a play called *The Roman Emperors*. REVETT, an author of very inconsiderable talents, produced a very indifferent play called *The Town Shifts*. CORYE was author of a piece called *The Generous Enemies*. TUKE produced a strange piece under the title, first, *Of the Soul's Warfare, comically divided into Scenes*, and afterwards, *The Divine Comedian*. An author hardly known, of the name of ARROWSMITH, is said to have written a piece called *The Reformation*.

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\* COTTON is said to have had such influence over a prelate of that time that his lordship would listen to no recommendation that did not come supported by this wit. A clergyman having by this means lost a valuable living, complained to a friend of the ill treatment he had received, and stated the pretensions in favour of which he had solicited for the benefice. "Oh," said the friend, "tis no wonder his lordship did not hear you, his ears were stuffed full of cotton."

A wit in the reign of CHARLES the second, named PAYNE, wrote two tragedies and a comedy. Their titles are *The Fatal Jealousy*, *The Siege of Constantinople*, and *The Morning Ramble*. The latter is not without merit. WRIGHT, a barrister, wrote two indifferent pieces called *Shyestes*, and *Mock Thyestes*. FANE, whose wit and talents LANGBAINÉ speaks of in the highest terms, wrote *Love in the Dark*, *Sacrifice*, and a *Masque*. BELON is known by nothing but one play, which LANGBAINÉ published under the title of *The Mock Duellist*. LESLEY, a frigid divine, threw away so much pains as to write in the reign of CHARLES the second, three sacred dramas called *Dives's Doom*, *Fire and Brimstone*, and *Abraham's Faith*.

SMITH. There were two dramatic authors of this name before the Restoration; neither, however, is very celebrated. One wrote *Hector of Germany*, *Freeman's Honour*, and *St. George for England*, and the other a comedy called *Cythera*. LEANARD, on whom LANGBAINÉ falls in a furious way for stealing, at the same moment, by the bye, that he himself pilfers the very comparison by which he illustrates his argument, that of "Gipsies stealing children to excite compassion," which remark, though original long before LANGBAINÉ, two

eminent wits have not disdained to retail again, one in a poem, the other in a dramatic piece, did not quite deserve all the rancour levelled at him by this detector of plagiaries, because he was in this no further guilty than many others whom LANGBAIN has quietly permitted to pass muster. LEANARD published two plays called *Country Innocence*, and *Rambling Justice*, which are evidently made up from BREWER's *Country Girl*, and MIDDLETON's *More Dissemblers besides Women*; but he produced another under the title of *The Counterfeits*; which, though it is of Spanish extraction, certainly furnished CIBBER with *She Would and She Would Not*.

JOHNS a schoolmaster, wrote a play with the title of *The Traytor to Himself*. COOKE, an author little known, produced *Love's Triumph*. SHIPMAN, one of the wits of CHARLES the second, of whom COWLEY has spoken handsomely, left a tragedy called *Henry the third of France*, in which, however, that wit he is said to have possessed in conversation is very little apparent. ECCLESTONE, who thought perhaps the licentious age in which he lived deserved some signal proof of divine vengeance, wrote *Noah's Flood*. MAIDWELL, a schoolmaster, was author of *The Loving Enemies*, a comedy. WHITAKER published *The Conspiracy, or Change of Government*.

FISHBURNE was said to have written in conjunction with the profligate ROCHESTER, a vile production under the title of *Sodom*; ROCHESTER, however, disclaimed having any hand in it, and thus all the infamy recoiled on the head of FISHBURNE. Some say he meant it as a satire by way of trying how far he might proceed in licentiousness.

SAUNDERS a very young writer, who gave great promise, produced *Tamermine the Great*, to which DRYDEN wrote an epilogue. We learn by it that the author was a mere boy\*. We know nothing of him, however, beyond this play, so that it is very probable he died soon afterwards. TUCHIN, who

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\* An author says that DRYDEN did SAUNDERS the honour to write this Epilogue: indeed he calls it a Prologue. We know that DRYDEN sold Prologues and Epilogues, and that the price was two guineas to the players, and three to an author. The following eight lines will shew he was a good advocate.

Ladies the beardless author of this day  
Commends to you the fortune of his play;  
A woman wit has often graced the stage,  
But he's the first boy-poet of our age.  
Early as is the year his fancies blow  
Like young narcissus peeping through the snow;  
Thus COWLEY blotted soon and flourished long  
This is as forward and may prove as strong.



bears the character of a venal and paltry writer, one who for his adulation was sometimes rewarded, and and for his scurrility sometimes beaten, or publicly punished \*, was the author of a pitiful production called *The Unfortunate Shepherd*.

Lady WHARTON, a relation of ROCHESTER, was flattered into an opinion that she could write, "for," says WALLER, "she and ROCHESTER were "allied in genius as well as in blood," and taught to fancy that, in a curious and extraordinary production which has been long forgotten, she wrote a play. It was called *Love's Martyr, or Wit above Crowns*. JEVON, author, actor, and dancing master, wrote a play which is the foundation of COFFEE's farce of *The Devil to Pay*, and in which he is supposed to have been afflicted by SHADWELL, who was his brother-in-law. Its title was *The Devil of a Wife*.

Having now gone through a very necessary,

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\* He was prosecuted for a poetical work, and being convicted, JEFFREYS sentenced him to be whipped through several market towns. To avoid this punishment, he petitioned the king to be hanged; but, his suit not being granted, and the whipping being inflicted, after the king's death he wrote a most bitter invective against him. He was always getting into scrapes; and, at last died in a miserable condition in consequence of a severe beating he received for having abused some Tories.

though I am afraid not a very interesting part of my work, I have now so cleared my ground that I may bring forward authors of better eminence, at the head of which groupe, as the reader will readily agree with me, stands DRYDEN.

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## CHAP VIII.

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DRYDEN.

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THE chequered life, opinions, character, and conduct of DRYDEN, might furnish an examination of extraordinary length which, in the hands of a candid scrutinizer, would be found, like this poets own writing, to consist of beauties that will be admired for ever, and blemishes that soon fade away.

DRYDEN seems to have come forward into the world very peaceably, and to have deliberated on the part he was to sustain in life with a view, when he should find himself perfect, to submit his merit to the opinion of the public; but he lived in an age of literary warfare, and he soon found that, as he must infallibly expose to the world the reigning folly by manifesting those talents which others wanted, he should be surrounded by vanity, ignorance, and envy, and assailed by all the slander resulting from such malignant passions.

Had he made his election at once, instead of treading upon these reptiles, to have passed by without noticing them at all, they would have retired confounded; his foibles would not have been blazoned into faults; nor his faults magnified into vices. He would have appeared upon a par with other human beings in indiscretion and frailty, but superior to them in those nobler qualities with which nature rarely vouchsafes to endow the mind of man; but this requires a firmness, and a philosophy but little known to us; and, though passiveness in such cases may be prudence, it is not nature. To return good for evil, taking it literally, is a virtue, but there is a spice of quixotism in it and unfortunately it was not in DRYDEN's way to conquer windmills but to elucidate truth. In short, though a wonderful writer, he was a mere man, subject to all the passions and failings incident to his fellow creatures, and thus we see him immortalize dunces by condescending to notice them, and degrading himself almost to their level by a ridiculous contention for a little cotemporary praise.

It were well if this were the worst. Contention begets asperity; till, at length, a man receives into his own nature qualities that are not congenial to it. Intending only to explain, he gets into recrimi-

nation, and deserts his own defence by vilifying his adversary ; and thus, having condescended to abuse, he is upon a footing with his dirty competitor. Human nature here gets another fillup, and, while he endeavours to account for all the slander thrown on him, he seeks for precedents, and finds unfortunately for his candour, that his predeceffors have not only sustained as much abuse, but he fancies they deserved more. Thus do the greatest men become at times unjust, and the best ungenerous ; and thus has DRYDEN given SETTLE cause to exult by entering the lists with him, and thus has LANGBAIN reason to reproach him for seeking out faults in the writings of SHAKESPEAR and his cotemporaries, which are much more glaring in his own. All this can be easier accounted for than defended.

A man born like DRYDEN, with that fullness of genius, that elevation of soul, that grandeur of idea, that strength of imagination, which so rarely meet in one mind, must naturally desire to appropriate such rare and admirable qualities according to their own meritorious bent, for it may be set down as an invariable maxim that perfection loves to attach itself to perfection, and that eminent abilities are naturally allied to goodness of heart.

But it is sometimes the misfortune of a poet to be poor, and God knows, to the disgrace of human nature, poverty is too often indiscriminately confounded with infamy. Poetry is allied to philosophy, and therefore a solitary study. Poets cannot condescend to become men of the world; the tinsel and the vanity of human pursuits are void of charms to those who have no mind for folly, no taste but for truth. Thus men of genius, owing to the world's unmerited contempt for them, and their honest pity for the world, tread a lonely path through life, envy their enemy, and conscious integrity alone their friend.

Where then do they seek for the consolation they so greatly deserve? Naturally in an intercourse with that sex among which, should they make a fortunate choice, they find elysium in that very world whose study is to provide them a hell. As nothing then can equal the exquisite felicity tasted by minds so delicately capable of meritorious enjoyment, the poet would be literally possessed of all those pleasures his pen transcribes from his fancy, were it not chequered by that bitterest of anxiety, her distress he loves. To see his wife and her offspring looking up to him for that assistance it is not in his power to afford attacks his reason, and converts his sensibility to madness. Imagination is racked to procure relief.

He toils, he succeeds: he reads to his approving partner those noble efforts of the soul with which his love for her inspired him. He hastens to receive the reward of his labours; and, at length, after repeated humiliations, the worthy effusions of human genius are sold for a scanty sum, to procure a fortune for the heir of some penurious bookseller.

Is it then wonderful that men whose trembling sensations are their essence, who are all soul, all quickness, all susceptibility—so irritated, so humiliated, so lowered—should at length grow careless of their fame, and give the world a handle for their censure? Thus it happened with DRYDEN, who finding himself in a licentious age, and, what was worse, in unpitied necessity, he certainly too illiberally conformed to the ruling passion of the times, which apostacy, in one of his dedications, he beautifully abjures, and loads his enemies with merited confusion.

The history of DRYDEN's political apostacy is by no means inexcusable. It had none of the features of WALLER's treachery; for, though the first essay of his genius made its way to the world through a panegyric on the Lord Protector, which was followed up with a congratulation on the return

of CHARLES the second, he did not facilitate the fate of CHARLES the first, nor flatter his murderer. He took public affairs in the state he found them, and in what he did he followed a whole nation.

When JAMES the second came to the throne, who, in struggling to establish Popery, lost his kingdom, it was natural to wish that some men of consideration might be prevailed on to countenance his darling measure. Sir KENELM DIGBY, a man greatly looked up to, Doctor REYNOLDS, and his brother, who had been famous disputants on this subject, and CHILLINGWORTH, whose opinions were highly esteemed, went over to the Church of Rome, and too easily persuaded DRYDEN to accompany them.

This is the less difficult to be accounted for, because those who were of any religion under CHARLES the second inclined to popery, for he himself died a Roman Catholic; so that this easy transition was no more than to acknowledge publicly, what before had been admitted privately. DRYDEN seems to have had too much simplicity to see how far he was to be made an instrument of in favour of



this new doctrine ; and, till by the persuasion of the priests, he had got into a controversy with STIL-  
LINGFLEET, he appears to have had no apprehen-  
sion of the probable injury it might do him pri-  
vately by giving his enemies a handle for their ca-  
lumnny ; but, having maintained his opinion, there  
was no receding ; and thus he went on, writing  
poems and translating histories, till at last upon real  
ground he got BURNET for an enemy, who was  
confessedly his superior in theological disputes.

These controversies so occupied him during the  
reign of JAMES the second, a period only of four  
years, that he had leisure to produce but one dramatic  
piece. This short time he had employed more to his  
worldly advantage than any similar period of his life.  
JAMES, though he did not understand poetry, un-  
derstood that DRYDEN served him very well as a  
good advocate, and thus time rolled on, the laureat  
flattering, and the monarch encouraging ; till, having  
celebrated the birth of a new prince, and written a  
poem full of predictions, which shew he was more a  
poet than a prophet, the nation waked from its de-  
lusion, and all the golden dreams of our projector  
vanished into air.

From this moment may be dated the adverse for-

tune of DRYDEN. The revolution accomplished, a papist could no longer fill the situation of poet laureat; he was deprived of this honour, and what was worse, his inveterate enemy, SHADWELL, succeeded him. In this situation, then, will we leave the history of DRYDEN, to examine up to this period his dramatic works, how far his other productions may be touched upon, and to speak shortly of those controversies which arose out of his success or disappointment.

The *Wild Gallant* a comedy, produced in 1663, gave no great promise of very striking reputation. The critics very successfully attacked it, and unfortunately, having withdrawn it for the purpose of making alterations, instead of wisely submitting to the decision of the public, it was re-produced in such a state that it received, according to the pugilists, a rising blow that had very nearly been fatal to the author's dramatic fame. LANGBAIN, who is very angry with him, certainly with reason, for his abuse of his predecessors, says the plot of this play is not original, but he does him the justice at the same time to admit, that he has so beautified it, that we will allow him to be called the author of the *Wild Gallant*.

The *Rival Ladies*, 1664. This is a tragi-comedy;

it is written in verse, and cunningly enough dedicated to Lord ORRERY who was a lover and a writer of poetry, and particularly of tragedies in rhyme. There were many reasons why DRYDEN chose to write in verse. It was his best forte, it was a novelty, though in his preface he endeavours to prove that *Gorbuduc* was written in the same manner, which assertion LANGBAINÉ has completely refuted; but the strongest reason, which indeed exposes DRYDEN to the accusation of being subservient, was that the ear of CHARLES had been accustomed to the jingle of French rhyme. The success of the piece did not warrant the experiment. It was thought novel, but it was considered as an innovation.

Before DRYDEN entered on a third play, he shielded himself under an alliance with Sir ROBERT HOWARD, whose works we have cursorily examined. They produced between them the *Indian Queen*, in 1665. It met with some success, but DRYDEN's enemies gave all the merit to HOWARD, which was invidious enough, for we are ignorant at this moment what part of it he wrote. Perhaps from this grew the coolness and afterwards the quarrel between these two authors.

The *Indian Emperor* followed the *Indian Queen* in every sense, for it was a sequel to it; a species of dramatic entertainment that never did nor ever will succeed greatly. A fear of this is supposed to have induced DRYDEN to have the story printed and circulated among the audience, and this is the circumstance ridiculed in the *Rehearsal*, where BAYES says that he shall take particular care "to insinuate the plot into the boxes."

*Secret Love*, or *The Maiden Queen*, was performed in 1668, by which time DRYDEN was made poet laureat. It is clear that he had not yet a fixed opinion of his own dramatic merit, for in the preface to this play, though he cannot give up that an author has a right to decide, and is competent to do so on the constructive value of his piece, yet he thinks he may be led away by a fond predilection of the more fanciful part so as to be completely deceived in any eventual judgement he may form of its success; which means nothing more than that an author may fail through the caprice of the public, and which indeed WALLER had said or rather insinuated before in his prologue to *The Maid's Tragedy*.

'Tis left to you ; the boxes and the pit  
Are sovereign judges of this sort of wit.

In other things the knowing artist may  
Judge better than the people; but a play,  
Made for delight and not no other use,  
If you approve it not, has no excuse.

*Sir Martin Mar all*, 1668, is a mixture from a variety of things; many passages are taken from QUINAULT's *L'Amant indiscret*, and *L'Etourdi* of MOLIÈRE: *Marmion* has also been looked into; and the song belongs to VOITURE; but the heaviest charge made against DRYDEN was that it was a play given to him by the Duke of NEWCASTLE, which he wrote when he was in France, and this is confirmed by the books of the Stationers' Company, in which there is a play entered in that nobleman's name, under the same title.

The *Tempest*, 1670, is an alteration, and intended as an amendment of SHAKESPEARE's celebrated play under that title. There are some very artful and ingenious things in this piece, and indeed DRYDEN could not have taxed his genius higher than by venturing to lay any thing of his own by the side of our incomparable bard. MIRANDA's sister, who like her had never seen a man, and the youth who had never seen a woman, make up but the same incident differently treated, therefore it is not any

thing created, but an extension of the same surprize, which SHAKESPEAR had before drawn as tight as it would bear, and even the she-monster had been anticipated by her brother; all which are clear proofs that the great and natural requisites for the stage were not completely known to DRYDEN, but this he did not care for; shew and spectacle had become the fashion, and where could such a vehicle be found to afford it as SHAKESPEAR'S *Tempest*.

DAVENANT, who it is said had a hand in this piece, was now dead. The taste he had introduced his successors were obliged to keep up; and DRYDEN, who has frequently but falsely confessed he had no talent for the stage, gave, however wisely or not, into this taste, and in his preface he defends his having pillaged SHAKESPEAR, by the lame excuse by the bye, that FLETCHER and Sir JOHN SUCKLING had done so before him. The genius of our immortal poet proved however to be equal to this or any ordeal, for posterity, that infallible critic, while this production with all its tinsel attractions is neglected and forgotten, has in its judgement thought proper to restore SHAKESPEAR to himself.

Whether or not it was considered that DRYDEN upon a comparison with SHAKESPEAR had fallen

into disrepute, this appeared to be the favourable moment for his enemies to exult. The famous ELKINAH SETTLE, whom DRYDEN in his folly handed down or rather kicked into the notice of posterity, instantly brought out a tragedy in rhyme, called *The Empress of Morecco*, which by means of hired applause, exactly the farce which was acted over again in France between RACINE and PRADON, grew into such favour that it was performed by the court ladies at Whitehall.

SETTLE, finding that this first blow told so well, published his play with engravings and a bold preface, in which he bid his adversary defiance. DRYDEN, who all his life seems to have known every thing better than prudence, grew exasperated, and poured out such a torrent of thoughtless strictures against SETTLE and his play, as instantly made the matter personal\*.

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\* It is hardly to be credited that a man of DRYDEN's consequence and abilities could condescend to write in this manner. "He is," says he, speaking of SETTLE, "a man of most deplored understanding, without conversation. His being is in a twilight of sense and some glimmering of thought, which can never fashion into wit or English. His style is boisterous and rough-hewn; his rhyme incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. The little talent which he has is fancy. He sometimes la-

DRYDEN got on from bad to worse. His next play was called *An Evening Love, or the Mock Astrologer*. It came out in 1671, and was dedicated to the duke of NEWCASTLE, who, as we have seen, wrote many plays and other things, of which, a circumstance among those human contingences we have to lament, nothing is generally known but his *Treatise on Horsemanship*. In this dedication, which was full of the fullsome flattery that DRYDEN despised and practised, is manifested a perturbed and dissatisfied mind. It had not cooled from the irascibility into which he had plunged it in his attack on SETTLE. He therefore deplures the treatment he receives, says that he

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“bours with a thought? but, with the pudder to bring it into the  
 “world, ’tis commonly still born.” In another place he says,  
 “He has a heavy hand at fools, and a great felicity in writing non-  
 “sense for them. Fools they will be in spite of him. His king,  
 “his two empresses, his villain, and his sub-villain, nay his hero,  
 “have all a certain cast of the father; their folly was born and bred  
 “in them, and something of Elkinah will be visible.” He next  
 goes into an examination of the play, in which there is nonsense  
 enough God knows, but it was pitiful that DRYDEN should have no  
 other employ than to detect it. He examines, exposes, discovers,  
 ridicules, imitates, and does every thing his invention can supply to  
 expose his rival, till at length he says, “And now having daubed  
 “him with his own puddle, we are come from abroad his dancing,  
 “masking, rebounding, breathing, fleet,” epithets fairly deduced  
 from SETTLE, “and as if we had landed at Gotham we meet no  
 “thing but fools and nonsense.”



has been guilty of no more faults than others; that if he has been a plagiarist so has every body else, that SHAKESPEAR'S plays are all to be found in the hundred novels of CINTHIO, which is a literal fallity by the bye, and that he is the very JANUS of poets; that FLETCHER, whose plays are from Spanish stories, knew nothing of plotting, and that his luxuriance was worse than the carelessness of SHAKESPEAR; that JONSON borrowed of the ancients, and that his excellence lay in characters of low vice and folly\*.

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\* It is so pitiable to think that DRYDEN, in this and other parts of his writings, should stoop to the despicable practice of reviling others for no motive upon earth but because he confesses himself vulnerable, which he ought not to have been had he felt firmly, that I shall with a few observations close this head, and get rid for the present of such an unpleasant topic. He says in one place, "but, malice and partiality set apart, let any man who understands English, read diligently the works of SHAKESPEAR and FLETCHER, and I dare undertake that he will find some solecism in speech, or some notorious flaw in sense and language. I dare almost challenge any man to shew me a page together which is correct in both." Partiality seems to have been here set apart, but malice was certainly not forgot. In another place he says, "I have always acknowledged the wit of our predecessors with all the veneration that becomes me; but I am sure their wit was not that of gentlemen, there was ever something that was ill bred and clownish in it, and which confessed the conversation of the authors." Then by way of the bathos in argument, he says, "They did not write for the age in which they lived, they wrote to be celebrated after their decease." As to their audiences, he says, "they knew no better, and there

What are we to understand by all this, and what is it to the world, supposing it to be truth? neither more nor less than that if he had been an offender, so had they; like the man who said he did not mind being hanged so he could be hanged in company. The play itself needed defence upon this score, for the main plot of it is borrowed from T. CORNEILLE, who as we have seen borrowed it from CALDERON. The rest is taken from MOLIERE, QUINAULT. and SHAKESPEAR; so it was no wonder he should conceive there was a necessity to cry rogue first.

*Tyrannic Love, or The Virgin Martyr*, 1672, is a mixture of merit and defect. DRYDEN informs us that this play was written in seven weeks, which is an insult rather than a conciliation. If it was imperfect on that account, why was not more time taken to perfect it? If it was perfect why have the

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fore were satisfied with what they brought. Those who call "theirs the golden age of poetry, have only this reason for it, that "they were content with acorns before they knew the use of bread." How must DRYDEN reproach himself, were he alive, with having written this unwarrantable malignity, to see how many of SHAKESPEAR's plays are at this moment the darlings of the public, how few of his own. He would find that there is so much bread to be extracted from them as not only to support managers and actors, but commentators, painters, engravers, vamps, publishers, and republicans, out of all number or calculation.

vanity to hold it up as a prodigy? The rants of MAXIMIN have been the perpetual theme of ridicule, and were by the author's own confession his shame. There is nevertheless some very fine writing in this play.

In his next two plays, DRYDEN seems determined to indulge his genius to the very stretch of enthusiasm; as this was a fanciful age, and the effort would so far justify the attempt that what he lost on the side of probability he would gain on the side of poetry, the success was equal to his hopes. Not forgetting, however the assistance his former abuse of his predecessors had lent him, he discredits them as much as possible in the epilogue, and again defends this measure in a preface, in which he threatens fully to expose them. He kept his word only in parcels, in which he has indeed exposed their faults, together with his own want of candour; but, as it would have given him pain to have enumerated their beauties he has only endeavoured to damn them, as POPE calls it, with faint praise.

This was the moment for the vultures of the theatre, as Doctor JOHNSON calls them, to attack DRYDEN, for certainly these plays were written in defiance of probability. MARTIN CLIFFORD, to

whom SPRAT addressed the Life of COWLEY, began. He said that *Almanzor* was no more copied from *Achilles* than from *Ancient Pistol*; that he had seen him in many disguises, and under other names. That this huffcap was once the Indian emperor, and at another time MAXIMIN. "You are, therefore," says he, "a strange unconscionable thief; thou art not content to steal from others, but dost rob thy poor wretched self too."

CLIFFORD in this business was SETTLE's harbinger, who had only lain by to muster materials and get a fair opportunity to attack DRYDEN with effect. It must be confessed he managed his defence, if not with so much genius, yet with more decency, candour, and good sense; for where he takes shame to himself it is done with a conscious deference, and before he exposes any exceptionable passage of his antagonist he acknowledges his talents and laments that he is compelled to do himself justice; all which conveyed in keen and solemn irony was sure to tell, because no man pleads his cause well who has lost his temper\*.

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\* DRYDEN having ridiculed SETTLE's description of the ships in the *Empress of Morocco*, SETTLE retorts upon him by an examination of his *Annus Mirabilis* and his Indian emperor, and it must be confessed successfully. DRYDEN, in the first, describing a ship called the

*Marriage ala Mode*, 1673, has been attacked as a plagiarism by LANGBAIN with his usual inveteracy against DRYDEN, who points out four authors from whom this play was stolen; but this, says he, is usual with our poet. DRYDEN tired with soliciting friends

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London, unfortunately styles her a Phoenix, in the first stanza, and a Sea Wasp in the last. "Our author," says SETTLE, "at his writing of this was not in his altitude to compare ships to floating palaces; a comparison to the purpose was a perfection he did not arrive to 'till the Indian emperor's days. But perhaps this similitude has much more in it than we imagine; this ship had a great many guns in her, and these put altogether, made the sting in the wasp's tail: for this is all the reason I can guefs why it "seemed a wasp." But "because we will allow him all we can to help him out, let it be a "phoenix, sea wasp, and the rarity of such an animal may do much towards heightening the fancy." SETTLE observes upon other passages with the same good effect; I shall give only one instance.

The people like a headlong torrent go,  
And every dam they break or overthrow:  
But, unopposed, they either lose their force,  
Or wind in volumes to their former course.

"A very pretty allusion," says SETTLE "contrary to all sense or reason. Torrents, as I take it, let them wind never so much, can never return to their former course, unless we can suppose that fountains can go upwards, which is impossible. Nay more, in the foregoing page he tells us so too. A trick of a very unfaithful memory.

"But can no more than fountains upwards flow."

By these and other remarks, SETTLE stood up, and was encouraged as the competitor of DRYDEN.

began in this play to deprecate foes, for he dedicated it to the libertine ROCHESTER, the very infamous WILMOT, who was well known to have been his insidious enemy.

The *Affignation, or Love in a Nunnery*, 1673, was damned, against the opinion, as the author says, of the best judges. DRYDEN had cast some reflections on a play of RAVENSCROFT who took this opportunity, as DRYDEN says of SETTLE, of "dirtying him with his own puddle." This was one in a prologue in which he ironically blames the public for letting so many plagiaries pass with applause, and, damning this which was perfectly original. This brought LANGBAIN upon RAVENSCROFT, who presently shewed that DRYDEN had pillaged no less than eight authors for those materials which he worked into *The Affignation*. This play is dedicated to sir CHARLES SEDLEY, in a style of great elegance, which is, however, lessened in its value by his usual want of firmness in deploring his hard treatment from the public.

*Amboyna*, 1673, as its title evidently shews, was written to serve a popular purpose by painting a picture of the cruelty of the Dutch to enflame the minds of the people against that nation,

It is, like most temporary things, weak, although he declares in his epilogue he hopes to make his poetry as destructive as that by which TYRTÆUS of old animated the Spartans.

*State of Innocence and Fall of Man.* This piece of course was never performed. It is exactly a morality, and, with MILTON before him, it was impossible but DRYDEN must produce something full of beauty; but it was written hastily and thoughtlessly, and has such reprehensible passages in it that its author thought fit to appologize for the liberties he had taken with poetic rules. His dedication of this production to the Duchefs of YORK, ought to have inspired her with an ineffable contempt of the author. Dr. JOHNSON calls it "an attempt to "mingle earth and heaven by praising human excellence in the language of religion\*.

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\* The following extract from the dedication will fairly bear the doctor out. LANGBAIN calls it a note beyond *Ela*. "Your person is so admirable that it can scarce receive addition when it shall be glorified: and your soul which shines through it, finds it of a substance so near her own, that she will be pleased to pass an age within it and to be confined to such a palace." It is curious enough that DRYDEN should make a kind of apology for printing this work. Why should it not be printed as well as the *Hind and the Panther*, or any other of his writings! But a false delicacy or some other motive prevailed, and falacy must be called in to excuse vanity. He says that many hundred copies were dispersed abroad without his know-

*Aurenzebe*, 1676. This tragedy is written in rhyme, and appears to have had great pains taken with it; parts of it are deservedly celebrated, but whatever are its beauties, its being conveyed through this vehicle is an unfurmoutable objection to its keeping a place on the theatre, where otherwise it might perhaps have been deservedly a favourite.

*All for Love*, 1678. This is the only play, if we may believe the author, that he wrote for himself. It is a pity, however, his favourite play is not original, for all the beauty is derived at least from SHAKESPEAR, and this circumstance has obliged the world to acknowledge that it is very nearly a complete tragedy. To shew, however, with what caution genius ought to be suppressed and curtailed, in furbithing up this play from SHAKESPEAR, the polish has displaced many of the beauties, and

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ledge or consent, and that these, gathering new faith, it became at length a libel against him, and, therefore, he was obliged to publish it in his own defence. Who would have taken the pains to copy a work of such length into chieles to multiply copies to the tune of many hundred? What a disgrace to genius are these weaknesses. Thus, to shew that he was an adept in all the distinctions of fiction, he practically defines gross hyperbole to be the style of a dedication, and subtle duplicity the language of a preface.



whatever it has gained in harmony and regularity it has lost in fire and nature. DRYDEN in this tragedy has professed to have imitated SHAKESPEAR, but he has done more, he has actually quoted him, not only out of this play but out of others; but every body knows the distinction; the merit of both are admirable, yet one truth is invincible. DRYDEN could never have shewn so much skill as a lapidary if SHAKESPEAR had not furnished the diamond.

*Oedipus*, 1679. Of this tragedy DRYDEN planned the whole, but only wrote the first and third acts; the rest was written by LEE. The subject has been often treated, but never before so ably. There are, however, some shocking and disgusting circumstances in it, and at best it must be considered as a great rather than a pleasing tragedy. The mind naturally prepares itself for affecting and even terrible circumstances, but without something to interest the milder feelings, that terror becomes offensive and revolting, which by being softened into pity would have been awful and exemplary.

*Troilus and Cressida*, 1679. This play which is confessedly an alteration from SHAKESPEAR, is nevertheless in many respects an improvement. The subject however is indecent and unbecoming, and

therefore can never command a respectable stand on the stage, though it might have pleased in the licentious age in which DRYDEN brought it forward. Every reader of taste and discernment rejoices that SHAKESPEAR wrote this play, because the characters of the Grecian chiefs are drawn so as to be put upon a fair competition even with those of HOMER; but the drift of the play, let it be retouched how it may, will never worthily affect a rational mind.

The *Kind Keeper* has more comic merit than DRYDEN thinks proper to allow himself, for he says his genius did not incline him to the stage, and that in particular comedy was not his talent. This play came out in 1680, and was written to expose, as LANGBAINÉ says, the keeping part of the town, but, to be true, this picture was obliged to be so indecent, that those who were ridiculed in it in a mass, for there does not appear to have been any personality, took the advantage of this excuse and fairly damned it. Says an author,

They damned the play all at one fatal blow,  
To break the glass that did their pictures shew.

Nay, so far did their aversion to hear indecency, who were accustomed to practise it, prevail, that when DRYDEN published it, he was obliged to expunge all the exceptionable passages.

The *Spanish Friar*, 1681, has one peculiar merit for which its author has been allowed infinite credit; I mean the union of the two plots, which are so well known and so equally material to the interest of the piece, that it is difficult to say which is subordinate. This may be a striking merit in a tragicomedy, but this very circumstance revolts against general dramatical or even poetical construction, which demands not two plots but a plot and an episode. DRYDEN, however, since he chose to write a play in itself heterogeneous, chose also to give it the sort of strength most likely to assist its interest.

DRYDEN has been accused of attacking the clergy in his play because he was refused a degree at college, a circumstance however that nobody has been able to substantiate. There can be no doubt but the satire is laudable, for it is general. If there be no such character as *Dominick*, let it be considered as a monster in nature with all my heart; but, as experience has frequently proved that such agents of infamy have too often destroyed the peace of families, and shrouded their hypocrisy under the veil of sanctity, nothing can be so meritorious as such an exposition; in which case let every one who complains be considered as an abettor of

this most pernicious of all crimes ; but as this play is well known and as deservedly a favourite as any thing can be, made up of incongruous material, this test will sufficiently shew that the drift was meritorious.

The *Duke of Guise*, 1683, written by DRYDEN in conjunction with LEE, was considered as a piece levelled at the enemies of the court, for which DRYDEN was severely attacked ; but he parried the thrust by throwing all the odium on LEE ; for, says he, “ availing himself of a promise I had made to “ write a play with him, he happened to claim it “ just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would “ have been glad of a little respite.” Thus he not only loads LEE with all the reproach due to what that author had written, but he tacitly blames him for hurrying him into what he had written himself, which was, as he tells us, at least two-thirds of the play.

*Albion and Albionus*, 1685, a masque, was the only dramatic piece written by DRYDEN during the reign of JAMES the second. It was like every thing else of this author at that time, produced on purpose to annoy the republicans ; and was particularly aimed at the fanciful doctrines of Lord SHAFTS-

BURY and his adherents. This masque was got up at a very great expence, but excited so little curiosity that it would have been very unprofitable to the theatre had it taken any run; but, to settle the matter at once, on the second night of its representation, an alarm being given that the duke of MONMOUTH had landed in the west, the various interests excited for the fate of that gallant but unadvised nobleman absorbed every other consideration, and *Albion and Albionus* was never resumed\*.

We have now gone over all the dramatic works of DRYDEN before the revolution. I shall next examine those of his cotemporaries up to that period, taking in such popular circumstances as served to make them remarkable.

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\* Doctor JOHNSON places this event at the performance of *King Arthur*, which did not make its appearance, as we shall see, till after the Revolution, and, six years after the Duke of MONMOUTH was beheaded.

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## CHAP IX.

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WYCHERLY, SHADWELL, SEDLEY, LEE, SETTLE,  
DURFEY, AND CROWNE.

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I SHALL have next to speak of WYCHERLY; but I shall not examine the particulars of his becoming a Roman Catholic in FRANCE, his turning Protestant on his arrival in ENGLAND, his being a favourite of VILLIERS, Duke of Buckingham, and of CHARLES the second, who paid him a visit in his lodging in Bow Street, where he was sick, and advised him to go to the South of FRANCE, allowing him five hundred pounds to defray his expences, the king's chusing him governor to his son, probably the Duke of MONMOUTH, and allowing him fifteen hundred a year as a pension for undertaking that trouble; his losing all this favour and protection by marrying the Countess of DROGHEDA; his resentment of the king's coolness; his lady's jealousy, the violence of which so conquered her health that she left him a widower; his disputes concerning her fortune by the

means of which he was thrown into prison, and afterwards released by JAMES the second, who, having seen the *Plain Dealer*, paid his debts and gave him two hundred a year, in spite of all which, however, he was always in distress; of these and many other particulars, which make up the curious and varied history of WYCHERLY, I must content myself with this summary account and pass on to his plays.

These are *Love in a Wood*, performed in 1672, which is so poor a specimen of that wit afterwards so conspicuous in WYCHERLY, that it can scarcely have been supposed the production of that author. The *Gentleman Dancing Master*, 1673, has a slight claim to praise. The *Country Wife*, so frequently altered, and now well known on the stage, is, however, a play of a different description. The characters are well drawn, and convey a strong portion of wit and gaiety, and at the same time display a great deal of nature and truth. The *Plain Dealer*, however, is the best of WYCHERLY's productions by a considerable difference. It was DRYDEN's opinion that this piece contained a species of the boldest and most useful satire that the English stage had ever boasted. It is certainly full of correct nature, strong point, and shrewd observa-

tion; but its plot is, perhaps, one of the happiest that ever was invented. An amiable man, who has estranged his heart from a friend and a mistress who love and value him, for a man and a woman who deceive and betray him, who is so infatuated with his absurd partiality that he is made to be unjust and ungenerous, with an honourable and noble heart, and who at length corrects his folly, and secures to himself happiness for life by the detection of his false friends, and a conviction of their truth who had been faithful to him, is a most admirable ground work indeed. Nor is the justice thrown into the episode less dramatic, or less meritorious, and what keeps it in place is, that, though it is interesting and useful in the piece, it is still episode. The misanthrope and other things seem to have been in WYCHERLY'S mind when he traced his characters; but when subjects are so well handled it is but mean cavilling to say much about it; and, in revenge, if he had recourse to French writers, English writers have had recourse to him, and to such effect as to make the world believe those pictures original which they have only traced upon his canvas.

SHADWELL, whose father lost a competent fortune by his adherence to CHARLES the first, having



been well educated, was thrown upon the world, like many others at the Restoration, and obliged to live by his wits and wrote several plays which were well received.

In this reign of plots and parties, as it was impossible to be considered as a public character without espousing some particular cause or opinion, so out of this came opportunity for all that severity which DRYDEN so profusely dealt on the head of SHADWELL; who, being a professed Whig, and his antagonist a professed Tory, furnished himself the materials by which his public character might be attacked, which, probably DRYDEN would not have used had not his success as a dramatic writer, though clearly an inferior one, roused that irritability in his nature, which upon such occasions he could not restrain. This, however, manifested itself only by indirect indications till the appearance of *The Duke of Guise*, when, it being plainly proved that SHADWELL had a hand in the pamphlet that was written against it, DRYDEN vindicated himself and a storm was raised that SHADWELL with great difficulty wheathered, and which obliged one HUNT, who had assisted, to take shelter in HOLLAND.

DRYDEN, having now a proper opportunity,

determined to crush SHADWELL at once; to do which he wrote his celebrated poem of *Mac Flecknoe*\*, which POPE confesses to have been the

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\* It is impossible to pass over here a very extraordinary error that every writer that I can find, except LAMBDAINE, has run into, as to the time of DRYDEN's writing this poem, and his motive for it. Over and over again are we told that it arose entirely from the mortification he felt when SHADWELL succeeded him as laureat, through the interest of lord DORSET, who has been said by the way which is not very likely having been the patron of SHADWELL, to have remunerated DRYDEN out of his own purse. As to Dr. JOHNSON, I do not see how he ever could have read the poem, for he says that DRYDEN "celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem, exquisitely satirical, called *Mac Flecknoe*." There is nothing in the poem that induces you to understand this, but you are obliged to believe the very reverse. First of all, was FLECKNOE ever laureat? and, if he was not, how could he resign the laurel to his son SHADWELL? At the time when this dispute was at its height, for he had left off writing for the stage nineteen years, FLECKNOE was on the verge of the grave, and it is very probable that he did not live till the revolution, a point, however, I cannot determine, for no one of his biographers have mentioned the time of his birth, or his death. The position of the argument in the poem is that FLECKNOE had long reigned "through all the realms of nonsense absolute;" and, being "worn out with business," which he must have been, having left off nineteen years,

"did at length debate

"To settle the succession of the state."

What state? The Realms of Nonsense. What has this to do with the King's poet laureat? Surely nothing; for, if it had, DRYDEN must have been the MAC FLECKNOE of his own poem. This Em-

ground work of *The Dunciad*, to which I shall add that, though for the cause of poetry it is well that these poems were written, for the cause of candour,

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peror of Nonfense, like ALEXANDER, nominates for a successor the most worthy, for says he

Nature pleads, that he  
Should only rule who most resembles me.  
SHADWELL alone my perfect image bears, -  
Mature in dullness from his tender years;  
SHADWELL alone, of all my sons, is he  
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity:  
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,  
But SHADWELL never deviates into sense.

He next enunciates the collateral pretensions of SHADWELL; hints at *Epsum Wells*, the *Virtuoso*, and other things in which he stole from ETHERIDGE, or was helped out by SEDLEY; but no mention is made of any thing so late as the duke of GUISE, and, having conducted him to the palace of Dulness, situate on the ruins of ALLEYN'S Theatre, then become a brothel, he invests him with the necessary insignia and disappears through a trap. What resemblance even in the remotest degree has this to the inauguration of a poet laureat? but, to clench this nail, which perhaps is fast enough already, LANGBAIN, one reason of whose enmity to DRYDEN was his firm friendship for SHADWELL, and who must have known, because he knew both the men, when and why this poem was written, has in his life of SHADWELL, these words: "Mr. DRYDEN I dare presume little imagined, when he wrote that satire of *Mac Flecknoe*, that the subject he there so much exposes and ridicules should have ever lived to have succeeded him in wearing the bays." Now, as LANGBAIN is Dr JOHNSON'S oracle as to every thing dramatic, it is really unlucky he did not happen to light upon this passage.

and out of respect to the reputations of their authors as men, it had been better they had never been written at all. General invective is easily vented and poetry is disgraced and contaminated when it descends to scurrility and personality.

SHADWELL, like BROME, made JONSON his model, and there can be no doubt but many of his plays have considerable merit. The *Sullen Lovers*, 1668. This piece is regular and natural. It however wants spirit and is little more than an imitation of *Les Facheux* of MOLIERE. The *Royal Shepherdess*, though always given to SHADWELL, was, as I have already noticed, written by a Mr. FOUNTAIN, and only fitted to the stage by him, as he candidly confesses in an epistle prefixed to the publication. The *Humourists*, 1671, was intended to ridicule the follies of the age, and the reader may discern a close imitation of JONSON throughout the piece. It shared the fate of DRYDEN'S *Kind Keeper*, being damned by those who most severely felt the force of its ridicule. The *Miser*, 1672, is both from PLAUTUS and MOLIERE. SHADWELL has made a very good play of it, but it remained for FIELDING to give it perfection.

*Epson Wells*, 1676, is certainly a play of great merit. The author had JONSON'S *Bartholomew Fair* in view, to which comedy it has been pre-

ferred, but it cannot, however, be said to have been stolen from it. It has been highly spoken of, and perpetually pilfered; but such was the forencs of those times, that the hits were thought too hard, and therefore those who felt them raised a successful opposition to it. *Psyche*, 1675. This was a tragedy full of machinery and written in rhyme. Indeed the very piece which was parodied by DUFFET. The *Libertine*, 1676. This tragedy is upon the same subject that has employed so many Spanish, Italian, and French pens, and which the more naturally it is written the more horror it will beget. SHADWELL has done his best, and to say truth, those who love terror, without probability or interest, may here satiate themselves. The *Virtuoso*, 1676 is a comedy professedly in imitation of JONSON. It is full of characters, strongly drawn, and incidents well imagined, some of which have been frequently borrowed since and brought out as novelties.

The *History of Timon of Athens*, 1678. This is SHAKESPEAR's play altered, but by no means for the better. The *True Widow*, 1679. This is again a comedy full of general satire, strong character, and whimsical incidents, and has been a good deal studied by some of our modern playwrights. Its fate was like others of this description; it hit

too hard to be liked. The *Woman Captain*, 1680, is a comedy of the same description; it had better success. The *Lancashire Witches*, 1682. This was a party play, and therefore was severely attacked. Whether DRYDEN was concerned in its opposition cannot now be known, for he does not appear to have done any thing overtly, but we are told from this time the mutual enmity of these authors was firmly rooted, and that it broke out in the following year we certainly know; after which time SHADWELL wrote nothing for the stage till the Revolution. I shall, therefore leave him for the present to speak of others his cotemporaries.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY, one of the most brilliant wits in the reign of CHARLES the second, and who in point of elegance emulated ETHERIDGE, and the more refined set who in the midst of their profligacy, unlike the king, ROCHESTER, and others, had some delicacy in their pleasures, and were now and then surprized with a gleam of something almost like honour and honesty, comes before us, not as he did before the court at Westminster, when he was fined five hundred pounds for a riot\*, but merely in quality of a dramatic writer.

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\* This happened near the death of CHARLES the second; and

SEDLLEY's dramatic productions, before the Revolution, were *The Mulberry Garden*, 1668, which is a comedy altered from *MOLIERE'S Ecole des Maris*. It had considerable success. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1677, is altered from SHAKESPEAR, and has some merit, but it stood no chance of success by the side of DRYDEN's *All for Love*. *Bellamira*, or the *Mistress*, taken from the *Eunuch* of *TERENCE*. It had by no means good success; nor indeed, though a most brilliant wit in conversation, are any of his plays to be put in competition with those of *ETHERIDGE*.

LEE, a writer of wonderful powers, whose ge-

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SEDLLEY was so shocked at the absurdity of his conduct, which had drawn on him so much odium, that he became from that moment an altered man. He applied himself to business, got into parliament, was a celebrated speaker, and signalized himself against the interest of JAMES the second, by resisting vehemently the proposition for a standing army after the defeat of the duke of MONMOUTH. He had also a domestic reason for his aversion to the King, which he now manifested so openly that it was evident nothing could content him but dispossessing JAMES of his throne. The king had seduced the daughter of Sir CHARLES; and, to make her amends, had created her countess of DORCHESFER. This SEDLEY considered every way as a most glaring insult, and from that moment determined on revenge. "I hate ingratitude, said he, to a friend," and therefore, as "the king has made my daughter a countess, I'll endeavour to make his daughter a queen," meaning the princess MARY, consort to the prince of ORANGE, afterwards WILLIAM the third.

nus hurried him away with such impetuosity that he was at last deprived of his senses. stands nevertheless very forward among dramatic authors. His plays before the revolution were nine in number. *Nero*, 1675. This tragedy is a mixed performance, and therefore ill calculated for success. It is written partly in prose, partly in rhyme, and partly in blank verse. *Sophonisba*, 1676. DRYDEN had made rhyme so fashionable that LEE as well as others followed his example. *Sophonisba* is wholly in metre. There is a wonderful tenderness in this play, and it had great success; but, from the moment DRYDEN rejected rhyme, and discovered that even blank verse was speaking more like men of this world, both his and all other tragedies upon this plan were abandoned.

*Gloriana*, 1676. This piece is full of frenzy, mixed now and then with great beauty. It had no success. *The Rival Queens*, 1677. This tragedy is so well known that its most striking passages are every where repeated by heart. It has been a good deal censured, unmeritedly, however: unless on account of some speeches which are full of bombast, for its characters and its construction are master-pieces. *Alexander*, every where a mixture



of the hero and the madman, is highly conceived and well opposed to the honesty and bluntness of *Clytus*. The mild and secure *Statira* is admirably contrasted by the vindictive and disappointed *Roxana*; and this discrimination pervades the piece.

As for situation, the entry of *Alexander*, his banquet, and his death, being disposed in the first, third, and fifth acts, proves LEE not only a good writer, but also an adept in the formation of dramatic production. In short, as *Polonius* says, "if it be madness, there's method in it."

*Mithridates*, 1678. This tragedy contains many flights of fancy, but it is by no means equal to other things of this author. DRYDEN wrote the epilogue, which is proportionably unequal. *Theodosius*, 1680, is a tragedy of sufficient merit to stamp the reputation of a writer. It is and ever has been in high favour on the stage; such favour as beautiful and exquisite language, noble and dignified character, and tender and melting distress demand. The episode, however, of *Marican and Pulcheria* is poor and unworthy to make a part of such a play. *Cæsar Borgia*, 1680, is composed of that mixture of bombast and beauty which appear in all LEE's productions when the frantic fit was on. It had,

however, some success for a time, but has been long thrown aside.

*Lucius Junius Brutus*, 1681. This tragedy is written with great beauty, strength, and dignity. It is remarkably free from that bombast which pervades this author, for there is a manliness and a noble grandeur runs through the whole of it. It was stopt after the third night, as we are informed, by lord ARLINGTON, who was then chamberlain, as an anti monarchical play. *Constantine the Great*, 1684. This subject, which has been treated by many authors, was not so fortunately handled by LEE as the last. The play, however, though it has inequalities, is not without merit, but it has not enough to entitle it to permanent success. These are all the plays of LEE before the revolution; he was, however, as we have seen, concerned in *Oedipus*, and the *Duke of Guise*, with DRYDEN.

SETTLE, a man who embraced all principles and all parties, who was a Whig one day and a Tory the next, who cavilled, wrote, and acted in defence of every species of contradiction, who lived upon the wages of literary prostitution, who, after bringing out seventeen dramatic pieces with various success, was reduced to such abject distress that he attended

a booth at Bartholomew fair, and wrote drolls in which he performed, particularly in one where he personated a dragon dressed out in painted leather, and who died in a workhouse—such are worldly fluctuation.—This SETTLE was at one time the idol of fashion and the competitor of DRYDEN; but, to take a cursory view of his plays.

*Cambyfes. King of Persia*, 1671. Speaking of this play, LANGBAINÉ lays archly that SETTLE was addicted to tragedy. It was a miserable business and was but little taken notice of, but *The Empress of Morocco*, as we have seen, made him amends. *Love and Revenge* 1675. This play is taken from HEMMING's *Fatal Contract*. It had but little success; but SETTLE, by way of keeping up the ball of controversy after his success against DRYDEN, attacked SHADWELL, who answered him very spiritedly. SETTLE did not mind this, for his fixed principle was that a man could not be too notorious. *The Conquest of China*, 1676, is stolen from Sir ROBERT HOWARD's play on the same subject. *Ibrahim*, 1677, is taken from SCUDERY, who, as we have seen, was a notorious borrower himself. In short the reader will recollect he was exactly a kind of French SETTLE.

*Pastor Fido*, 1677. The reader, pitying poor

GUARINI, must sicken at a subject so often and so ignorantly treated. *Fatal Love*, 1680, was fatal to its author, for it had no success. The *Female Prelate*, 1680. This is nothing less than the story of *Pope Joan*, made into a play, a subject of all others the most impracticable to manage. The *Heir of Moocco*, 1682. Not having had enough of the *Empress*, SETTLE here introduced the *Heir*; but, as DRYDEN was otherwise employed than to enter the lists of controversy with him, this heir died before it had reached maturity. These are all SETTLE's plays before the revolution, most of which would have died away after a few nights, had DRYDEN, and others, only resolved to treat the attacks of their author with the silent contempt they deserved.

DURFEE, who has promulgated more dramatic nonsense of his own, and contrived to shape into nonsense more of the wit of other men, than almost any writer or imitator that ever lived, nevertheless, by taking no side and conducting himself inoffensively, passed through life, with a few exceptions\*,

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\* Now and then DURFEE ran on too fast. Upon one of these occasions he had a benefit to prevent, as ADDISON tells us, his singing in a cage for life. The story runs thus, in his own words. "After

pleasurably to his friends, and profitably to himself. He was either, immediately, or collaterally, concerned in thirteen pieces before the revolution.

In the *Siege of Memphis*, 1676, DUFFEY was determined to be original as to plot, and an imitator as to style, both of which circumstances were unfortunate; for, as he could neither invent nor write verse, his story is uninteresting, and his writing fustian, and the audience gave him to understand that they were of this opinion. The *Fond Husband*, 1676, is a much better play, and was well received. It is a comedy, and in it there is nothing attempted beyond the sketch of the author's abilities. He was however obliged to those writers he had so quick a knack of pilfering for the greatest part of its success. *Madam Fickle*, 1677. In this play this cuckoo, as LANGBAIN calls him "who," says he, "loves to suck other birds eggs," has here ranfanked nests in plenty, for there is scarcely an incident, or

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"having written more odes than HORACE, and about four times as many comedies as TERENCE, I find myself reduced to great distresses by the importunities of a set of men who of late years have furnished me with the accommodations of life, and will not, as we say, be paid with a song."

even a speech, that is not stolen from something. *The Fool turned Critic*, 1673. Not contented with stealing this play, which was originally RANDOLPH'S *Jealous Lovers*, he has even stolen the very prologue.

*Trick for Trick*, 1678. This, which was announced as an original play, was very soon discovered to be a bad alteration of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER'S *Monfieur Thomas*. *Squire Old Sep*, 1679. This play is borrowed from so many things, and so full of intricacy, that nothing can be so difficult as to discover the drift of the author. The public therefore did not thank Mr. DUFFY for producing what nobody could understand. *The Virtuous Wife*, a comedy, 1680. Here, not content with stealing from others, he has gone back and gleaned from MARSTON'S *Fawn*, where he had reaped a pretty harvest before; and to make all sure, he traversed DRYDEN'S *Marriage A la Mode*, and a few other things that lay in the way. *Sir Barnaby Whig*, 1681. For this play he is obliged to ST. EVREMOND and MARMION.

The *Royalist*, selected like the rest, but with better judgment. *The Injured Princess*, 1682. This

is a tragi-comedy. It is stolen from SHAKESPEAR'S *Cymbeline*, and most wretchedly managed; but, as if this were not enough for DURFEY, he has palmed the old prologue to his own play called *The Fool turned Critic*, for a new one. "So, that," says LANGBAIN, "what CLIFFORD applies to DRYDEN of stealing from himself more justly belongs to DURFEY." The *Commonwealth of Women*, a tragi-comedy. This is nothing more than FLETCHER'S *Sea Voyage*, badly altered, "the alterations," says LANGBAIN, "may be discerned from the original like patches on a coat." The *Banditti*, which is taken from SHIRLEY'S *Sisters* and other things, was damned, upon which DURFEY dedicated it to the person who was foremost in the riot by the name of Sir CRITIC CATCALL, determined, Swift like, to get money on one side or the other. With the *Fool's Preferment* we take leave of DURFEY for the present, on which play I sufficiently descanted when I examined FLETCHER'S *Noble Gentleman* from which it is stolen.

CROWNE, who was brought forward by ROCHESTER because he envied DRYDEN, and who was afterwards deserted by that dishonourable and profligate nobleman, when contrary to his morals

and mind he found himself in the predicament of protecting merit \*, wrote eighteen plays, twelve of which appeared before the revolution. *Juliana*, a tragi comedy, 1671. This can only be called a piece of promise, for it was a first attempt; but is nevertheless not destitute of merit. *Charles the*

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\* ROCHESTER hated DRYDEN for his talents, and sought every occasion to mortify him. CROWNE came in his way, and he prevailed upon the queen to give him the preference, when she signified a wish to get a masque written for the court. CROWNE, however, meeting with success, ROCHESTER'S envy was instantly excited, and he became the poor poet's implacable enemy, nay he went so far as to endeavour at injuring him with the king, to whom he insinuated that he was lowly born and meanly educated, for which he was justly treated by the king with contempt, who from that moment took CROWNE into his favour. This is one tract among the numerous instances of mean and pitiful conduct in a man who was constant to nothing but profligacy. He was brave with lord SANDWICH upon the court of Norway, and a coward with lord MULGRAVE in Hyde-park. A porter, a beggar, a fidler, a mountebank, every thing by turns; dissolutely gay, grossly sensual, with an avidity for knowledge that it might furnish him with the means of mischief; religious in professions, blasphemous in practice; sober for five minutes, and drunk for five years; but as I have no obligation to be his biographer, so I shall here have done with him, noticing nothing further than that his pretensions to be considered as a dramatic author are as false as the rest of his conduct; for *Valentinian* and *Sodom*, the two wickedest plays that ever were written, though attributed to him, were the productions of others.



*Eighth of France*, 1672. This play has certainly merit, but is revolting on account of its being in verse, though the subject is purely historical. ROCHESTER was at that time his patron, and received all the homage which CROWNE so lavishly paid him in his dedication; but, to shew he was a total stranger to gratitude, feeling, or consistency, he ridiculed this very play and this very author by name in his imitation of one of BOILEAU's satires. By the way those dealers in tinsel, COWLEY, and BOILEAU, were the poetic gods of ROCHESTER's idolatry.

*The Country Wit*, 1675. This play is an imitation of MOLIERE's *Sicilien*. It contains a great deal of low wit, and perhaps is not the better for the poet's having been commanded to write it. *Andromache* is attributed to CROWNE, but is nothing more than a translation from RACINE by some young gentleman of family, and superintended by this author. It was ill received. *Calisto*, 1675. This is the masque which at the instance of ROCHESTER the queen commanded CROWNE to write. It was principally performed by noblemen and ladies of the court. *City Politics*, 1675, is a severe satire upon the Whigs, in which there are many personalities, frequently a dangerous, and always an unjust

measure. In the present instance it hurt both the author's profit and reputation; but it was impossible at that time to be on the court side without manifesting some folly of this kind.

*The Destruction of Jerusalem*, 1677. This tragedy is in two parts, and was considered as a work of merit. The same objection, however, lies against it as against *Charles the Eighth*. It is historical, and it is in verse. This is the play that so strongly excited ROCHESTER's jealousy. *The Ambitious Statesman*, which word ambitious is said by an author to be an expletive, is strongly written, but did not succeed. *Henry the Sixth*. There are two plays with this name, 1680, and 1681. One of them has the additional title of *The Miseries of Civil War*. They are both imitated from SHAKESPEAR, but by no means improved. *Thyestes*, 1681. Of all the translations of this play of SENECA this is the only one that ever had any thing like success. It is, however, as must plainly be seen, heavy and declamatory; and, after all, though it might boast some sterling points, it became naturally tiresome among a people so volatile as the English were at that time. *Sir Courtly Nice* was the last play this author produced before the Revolution. This

is, perhaps the best of CROWNE's comedies. It was taken by the command of CHARLES the second, from a Spanish play which the king was very fond of. It has frequently been revived, and always with success.

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## CHAP X.

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BANKS, MRS. BEHN, RAVENSCROFT, AND TATE.

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BANKS, a very indifferent yet rather a favourite writer, produced five tragedies which demand an examination in this place. His great and almost his only merit was the choice of affecting circumstances which is particularly obvious in his first piece *The Rival Kings*, performed in 1677, which play, in spite of rant and bombast, the worse for being his earliest attempt, is in some degree interesting. It is taken from the romance of *Cassandra*. The *Destruction of Troy*, 1679, was rather out of this author's beat. He knew better how to please those who forgave nonsense in favour of tenderness, than to emulate the flights of HOMER and VIRGIL.

*Virtue Betrayed*, containing the story of ANNA BULLEN, and performed in 1682, had success because, says LANGBAIN, it was written for the fair

sex, which certainly is a compliment to their sensibility though not to their understandings; for, though it is framed from a story that every body knows to be affecting, yet it is written every where poorly, and in many places despicably. The *Unhappy Favourite* was performed in 1685, and is in every respect a much better play than the former. It is well known, and has greatly maintained an affluence over those plays, written upon the same subject by JONES, BROOKE, and even RALPH. The fact is, the circumstances are strongly interesting, and among a great deal of trash there is some beauty. The *Island Queens, or the Death of Mary Queen of Scotland*, 1684, was prohibited. It was, however, published with a vindication and seems to have been on the stage since, for one of the editions bears the names in the dramatis personæ of WILKS, BOOTH, Mrs. OLDFIELD, and other performers of that time.

It is sometimes unfortunate that one cannot do justice to the talents of great and celebrated men and women but it may happen to be the reverse of praise; and really, when truth flows into sarcasm instead of sweetening into panegyric, it becomes rather an irksome task to obey the dictates of such a precise monitor. On this account I am not very

forry that I have but a finall portion of room to spare for my animadversions on MRS. BEHN and her plays; but this is the less to be regretted, as to the lady herself, because all her pranks, including her platonic intimacy with OROONOKO, her becoming to great a favourite of CHARLES the second as to be sent on a secret embassy to HOLLAND, where another JUDITH in patriotism, she made so innocent a display of her charms, as to set the hearts of a Dutch admiral, a statesman or two, and others Mynheers of eminence in such a blaze as to put out the fire of the English ships at ROCHESTER; because I say these and others of her inoffensive gallantries have been, with notes, animadversions, and vignettes, handed to all the young ladies in the kingdom who are subscribers to the circulating libraries; and, as to her works, as they are principally distilled from the lees and dregs of all kinds of writers, a small taste of them will be quite strong enough for a delicate stomach.

This lady to whom LANGBAIN gives the appellation of Aistrea, others Aphara, others Aphra, but none Aistarte, produced fifteen plays before the Revolution, and two afterwards. The *Forced Marriage* was a tragi-comedy, performed in 1671, of which no one can find out the success. The *Amorous*

*Prince* 1671, was taken from *The Curious Impertinent*, and *The City Night Cap*, which circumstance has been already noticed. It is a hash with higher seasoning. *The Dutch Lover*, 1673. This was all in Mrs. BEHN's way. Her platonic amour with VANDER ALBERT, when she was in Holland, made her a perfect adept in Dutch courtship. It was a fat subject; and, to convince the reader she meant it should be luscious, she begins her preface with "Good sweet honey sugar-candied reader"

*Abdalar, or The Moor's Revnge*, which CIBBER says is very poorly written, was produced in 1677. The lady, however, could not resist the subject, which is MARLOE's *Lust's Dominion*, or *The Lascivious Queen*. Lest it should sink under critical investigation we will show our forbearance by stopping at CIBBER's decision. *The Town Fop*, 1677. This comedy is almost a translation of *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*, written by WILKINS. *The Rover*, 1677, was written in two parts. The scene of the first lies in Italy, and the other in Madrid; I suppose to shew gallantry in its proper element, and to shew what an excellent knack had this warm writer in heightening voluptuousness. LANGEBAINE, in his observations on these plays, says that she has "flayed the eel by beginning at the tail." The

stories are borrowed, or stolen, as she herself confesses, but the language is her own.

*Sir Patient Fancy*, 1670, is a mixture of MOLIÈRE'S *Malade Imaginaire*, and MONS. POURCEAUGNAC, with a little touch of BROME'S *Damoiselle*. The *Feigned Courtizans*, 1679. This is said to be the best play of MRS. BEHN'S writing. I suppose they mean the highest seasoned, for nothing can be so repugnant to decency and decorum as for ladies of honour to assume the characters of prostitutes to gain the affections of men of honour; but the lady did not feel this at all, nor to what a degree she insulted delicacy by her dedication of this play to NELL GUIN\*. The *City Heiress*, 1682. I have already mentioned that MRS. BEHN and

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\* This dedication, which for adulation is fairly a companion to that which DRYDEN addressed to the duchess of York, when he published his *State of Innocence*, is so full of meanness and servility that it will be curious to quote a part of it to shew how profusely profligate women as well as men could be at that time of talents with which in such cases, they did every thing but dignify literature. Dr. JOHNSON says that, since the deducing the Roman emperors, there has been no hyperbolical adulation equal to these two dedications. But let the lady speak for herself. "Your permission, madam," says she, "enlightened me, and I with shame look back on my past ignorance, which suffered me not to pay an adoration long since



CHARLES JOHNSON divided MIDDLETON'S *Mad World my Masters* between them; but there was very little contention for this bone, for the lady took all the fat and the marrow for her *City Heirefs*, and the gentleman all the lean for his *Country Lasses*.

*The False Count*, 1682. This comedy is written in a very low style, particularly the part of the *Chimney Sweeper*; but no doubt she thought had done enough by having, for her second title, *A New Way to play an Old Game*. *The Round Heads*, 1682, is, as its title announces, a party subject, and therefore not so much in this lady's way, her style being conjunction, not division. *The Young King*, performed in 1683, is a tragi-comedy, and as incongruous as any thing that ever bore that designation. Mrs. BEHN'S dedication of this play is in natural and glowing language. She knew better how to address a keeper than a kept mistress. *The Lucky Chance*, or *The Alderman's Bargain*, 1687. This is a comedy in this lady's truest manner. One very

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"where there was so very much due; yet even now, though secure  
 "in my opinion, I make this sacrifice with infinite fear and trem-  
 "bling, well knowing that so excellent and perfect a creature as  
 "yourself differs only from the divine powers in this: the offerings  
 "made to you ought to be worthy of you, whilst they accept the  
 "will alone."

curious circumstance attended it, for it was very nearly being damned for its indecency, and obscenity, which the critics would insist it was full of, both in the action and the language. From this charge the good lady vindicated herself; not by proving, however, that it was not indecent, but that she was no more indecent than her neighbours. She might have gone on and quoted *Shylock*. “You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house.” In short it is impossible not to take the lady's part; for as she had then produced thirteen plays, and all as good as this, it was rather a sort of prudery and squeamishness in the town to begin their objections here. One thing to be sure was against her. Hitherto she had only heightened the indecent plots of others; this indecent plot was all of her own invention. With *The Emperor of the Moon*, performed also in 1687, we shall take leave of Mrs. BERN for the present, which was nothing more than a farce borrowed from an Italian opera that had been translated into French. It was whimsical, and had some success.

RAVENSCROFT, who was rather a compiler than an author, and who probably would not have been known to the world at this moment if DRYDEN had not lifted him into consequence by condescending

to fear him, produced, before the revolution, nine plays. Their titles are *Mamamouchi*, *The Careless Lovers*, *Scaramouch*, *The Wrangling Lovers*, *Edgar and Elfrida*, *The English Lawyer*, *The London Cuckolds*, *Dame Dobson*, and *Titus Andronicus*. Of all these plays we know nothing except that *The London Cuckolds*, the greatest disgrace the theatre ever sustained, was for a long time performed on lord mayor's day. It is like the rest a series of thefts from beginning to end, and indeed the productions of this man ascertain one very curious thing; which is, that they are so fairly transcriptions, or translations, literally, that you can scarcely trace throughout the whole how he would have written had he made the attempt.

TATE, who wrote and altered nine plays, was a man of sound erudition and good judgment. He is very little known however to the world except by his alteration of *Lear*, which, though by no means the best, is upon the whole the greatest favourite of the public, for reasons that I have already given. The rest of his plays, not one of which is original, are called *Brutus of Alba*, *The Loyal General*, *Richard the Second*, *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth*, *Cuckold's Haven*, *Duke and no Duke*, *The Island Princess*, and *Injured Love*.

There are a few obscure authors also who compiled dramatic pieces about this period, one of whom was KIRKMAN. He mutilated twenty-seven pieces from SHAKESPEAR, FLETCHER, JONSON, and others. About a hundred and twenty plays were besides produced by anonymous writers. In short, almost any thing that came to the theatre was accepted and performed, and thus we count between six and seven hundred dramatic pieces, of one description or other, brought forward in the interval between the death of JAMES the first and the Revolution; but it must be noticed that, though this was a period of sixty three years, many more than five hundred of these pieces were produced between the Restoration and the Revolution, which was only thirty-nine years and this upon an average is about fourteen plays a year.

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## BOOK VIII.

FROM THE REVOLUTION TO GARRICK.

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CHAP. I.

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STATE OF THE STAGE AT THE REVOLUTION AND  
ONWARDS TO 1708.

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WE have seen that, at the Restoration, the stage become a regular establishment under two patents, that one company by calling in auxiliary assistance conquered the other, and that, after much contention and a struggle between a variety of interests, all dramatic disputes were amicably adjusted by a union of the two companies in 1684; at which time they in one body performed in Drury Lane, and were called the King's Company.

In their expectations, however, of the probable

advantages that might arise from this coalition of interests, they were miserably deceived. Scarcely had they sat down under the comfortable idea that every man would consider his neighbours good and do his utmost to serve and assist the general concern, than the whole community began to be convulsed with different dissensions. The united patentees imposed what terms they thought proper on the actors; for the profits of the theatre were divided into twenty shares, ten of which went to the proprietors, who were ten in number, and the other moiety to the actors, in such subdivisions as their different merits entitled them to.

Here then are ten managers, or, as CIBBER calls them, task-masters, some of them not in the remotest degree conversant with affairs of the theatre; but, as if this was not enough to create dissensions, such of these proprietors as were in needy circumstances sold their shares to money-lenders, or other speculators, who though still more ignorant of theatrical business had nevertheless a proportionate voice in the management of the concern. This was the situation of the theatre in 1695.

In proportion as ignorance usurped authority, so the actors, who ought of course to be considered as

the real supporters of the theatre, began with reason to be dissatisfied. The major part of this decemviri, wanting to cut up the hen for her golden eggs, thought they should carry all the world before them by laying on foreign taste and foreign decorations as thick as possible, which by the way at length produced the opera, since when without a single deviation the mass of the nobility have looked down with contempt on the theatre.

In consequence of all this they presently got into a suit in Chancery, which lasted twenty years. Had their measures been dictated by common sense, still every thing might have come about, but unhappily their conduct was not tinged with that ingredient. The expence for spectacle was redoubled, foreigners were cherished at any price, and not only the share of the profits decreed to be divided between the actors was considerably reduced, but the actors themselves were badly dressed and in every other respect neglected and held in contempt.

In the mean time their profits fell off every day; and, as in consequence it was found necessary to lessen the expence, instead of directing their at-



tention to the real grievance, they lowered still more the emoluments of the actors ; and, in order to manage as much to their own confusion as possible, under a colour of justice they began with the principal performers, and upon their murmuring, to go from bad to worse, brought forward young actors and actresses in the characters usually played by the veterans. The natural consequence of all this is evident. BETTERTON, a theatrical WARWICK, who had made and deposed kings at pleasure, began to look about him ; and, getting into his plot the principal performers, they agreed to oppose their oppressors and stand or fall together.

All this, however, the patentees, secure in their power and covered with their foreign levies, treated with perfect indifference ; but when they found that, by the interest of BETTERTON, the complaints of the actors were, through lord DORSET, laid before king WILLIAM, they began seriously to reflect on their situation. They were not, however, easily repulsed, and some of them knowing the world pretty well, and particularly RICH, who was a lawyer, suggested that by the law as it then stood no other patent could be granted. This, however, was looking a little farther than they could leap, for it was very nearly considered as an insult to the crown, and

therefore the aggrieved parties had liberty to consult the ablest lawyers on the subject, who reported that the grants of CHARLES the second did not preclude the right of any succeeding prince to grant a patent to any person with whom he might think proper to entrust it.

This decision was severely felt by the patentees, who, too late, sincerely wished for a reconciliation; which, had not the players been strengthened with the acquiescence of all sensible men that their cause was the cause of truth and honour, and therefore ought to be encouraged, could not now have been complied with, on account of their having gone so far and interested even government in their quarrel.

In this crisis queen MARY died; and, during the interval that the theatre was necessarily shut up, BETTERTON and his adherents had leisure to pursue their plan of operations. In the mean time the opposite party were trying their utmost to gain over volunteers to their standard. POWEL and VERBRUGGEN, whose salaries had been only forty shillings each, was now complimented with four pounds, and the rest of the actors and actresses in proportion. BETTERTON, however, lost nothing by this; for all

who felt themselves properly aggrieved found his case to be their own and were as willing to emancipate from tyranny as he was. Every thing promised a favourable issue. They had an audience of the king who graciously dismissed them with assurances of his favour and protection, and they were immediately empowered by his royal licence to act in a separate theatre by themselves.

Subscriptions instantly, and most spiritedly, were set on foot, and it was agreed to erect a theatre within the walls of the Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields. As this, however, required time, the patentees were determined to use all their diligence to get the start of them every way, and, therefore, opened on the following April with *Abdelazar, or the Moors Revenge*, written by Mrs. BEHN, and introduced by an occasional prologue, which was CIBBER's first literary attempt. After the first night, however, they were completely deserted, and the town, who had been accustomed to see the best actors, waited with impatient anxiety for the opening of the new theatre.

In about a fortnight their curiosity was gratified; for on the thirteenth of April, 1695, the new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields opened with CONGREVE's

celebrated comedy of *Love for Love*\*; the success of this play was so great that they scarcely found it necessary to perform any other throughout the whole season. CONGREVE now accepted a whole share to produce a play every year, exclusive of his profits from this comedy, in the same manner as DRYDEN did to produce two; some say four, but that I shall contest. His next play, however, *The Mourning Bride*, did not make its appearance till three years afterwards.

Thus Lincoln's-inn fields went on favoured with splendid success, while Drury-lane was completely deserted, and indeed upon so natural and fair a principle that nobody regretted it. In time, however, the novelty of encouraging merit wore off; besides many of the performers at Lincoln's inn fields grew old and became enfeebled, while those at the other house, being young and vigorous, came forward with some degree of force. CIBBER by this time

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\* This play had nearly fallen into the hands of the patentees of Drury-lane, for before the rupture between the managers and the actors it had been read and approved; but, while the articles of agreement were preparing, CONGREVE received an intimation of the premeditated design, and, therefore, paused under a determination that the play should go with the actors for whom he had written the parts.

had made a considerable progress both as an author and an actor, and they were reinforced by the plays of SOUTHERN and VANBRUGH, which made their dramatic novelties at least five to one in number. In addition to this, BETTERTON'S company, confident of their superior merit, grew negligent with their success, in proportion as the disappointment of their competitors stimulated them to industry.

This brought on a sort of recrimination between this theatre and the public, who were accused by the actors of capriciousness, while they accused the actors in return of supineness and want of exertion. The consequence was that the cause of neither house was heartily espoused, and at length Lincoln's-inn-fields was obliged to follow the example of Drury-lane, and only pay their people in proportion to the success of the concern. CIBBER tells us that the manager of Drury-lane never paid the people at all when the money did not come in, nor when it did except in such proportion as suited his own convenience. "I was one of the many," says he, "who for six acting weeks together, never received one day's pay; and for some years after seldom had above one half our nominal salaries." No wonder then when the other house began to adopt a conduct so shameful, so unjust, and so dis-

honest, the public should begin to think their principles no better than those of their neighbours; but now came a stroke of cunning, as RICH imagined, that whether or not it might benefit him was sure to injure the interest of his adversaries.

He had conceived that, as servants have generally the ear of their masters and mistresses, if he could ingratiate himself with those he should soon fill his boxes, to the desertion of the other house. Footmen had never before this time been admitted into the theatre, except to wait the pleasure of their employers, nor at all till after the fourth act of the play. Determined therefore to secure their interest, he opened the upper gallery gratis for their reception, and "if he did this to get applause," says CIBBER, "he certainly succeeded, for it often thundered from the full gallery above, while the thin pit and scanty boxes below were in a state of perfect serenity." This shameful custom, which continued so long, and was with such difficulty shaken off, was the most flagrant disgrace the theatre ever sustained.

But he was not content with this. Conceiving that fashionable bucks and sprigs of quality would come to the theatre with more readiness if they

could get access to the actors and actresses, he admitted such as would pay behind the scenes; a custom that struck at the very existence of all decency and decorum, and indeed went to render the performance impracticable. This, however, CIBBER, when he came to be one of the managers, contrived as he tells us, at the hazard of their lives to abolish; "after which," says he, "we brought what had before disgraced the theatre into all the licences of a lobby, into the decencies of a drawing-room."

This was not all. Buffoonery, tumbling, rope-dancing, and every other disgraceful species of mummery that was afterwards so successfully practised by his son were exhibited through this ignorant and pretended director of the public taste. It was at this moment that JEREMY COLLIER published a book against the stage. His strictures go to the immorality of the plays, the profligacy of the performers, and the licentiousness of the poets; and it must be confessed that, however he may have been too liberal of invective, he has fairly embraced the side of truth. All the indecency that condemned the plays of ETHERIDGE and others to oblivion, that more than once wrung from DRYDEN contrition and repentance that made that filthy and stupid play *The*

*London Cuckolds*, a standing dish with profligates, and, in short, bad as the times were, that kept ladies from the new plays till they had enquired whether they might attend them without blushing, were manfully exposed to that reprehension that no man could dare to say they did not severely merit.

The misfortune in *COLLIER* was, that, in not qualifying the business, he discovered the cloven foot. Had he recommended a reform, the advice had been wholesome, and every friend to decorum would have thanked him; but nothing would content him but rooting out the evil by abolishing the stage itself; which, by all the world, had been ever acknowledged, if properly conducted, to be as wholesome a vehicle for morality as the pulpit\*. For this reason, and for this only, the wits had a fair occasion to attack him, and *DRYDEN*, *CONGREVE*, *VANBRUGH*, *DENNIS*, and others levelled at him a

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\* A gentleman in the company of *JOE HAINES*, the famous actor, and wit, said he could not conceive what induced Mr. *COLLIER* to insist upon the total suppression of the stage, when it had only been abused by the licentiousness of a few of its members. "Why," said *HAINES*, "the stage was instituted to mend the morals, and "*COLLIER*, being by profession a moral mender, he quarrels with "it, upon the principle that two of a trade can never agree."



volley of keen satire. They had, however, a bad cause to defend, for they could neither refute his general arguments, nor exculpate themselves; nay they injured the cause they espoused, for the public, ever in the right on the side of all that's true and honourable, felt fuller conviction from their lame defence, and the controversy finished so far in favour of COLLIER that the town resolved indecency should no longer be considered as wit; and thus, "by degrees," says CIBBER, "the fair sex" came again to fill the theatre on the first day of a "new comedy without fear or censure."

Thus COLLIER's work did much both for himself and the stage, for the general drift of it was considered so laudable by all persons, but especially by the king, that he granted him a *noli prosequi* which relieved him from the penalty of the law in consequence of some impropriety in his political conduct; some say absolving two traitors before their execution, but this was not all. The stage afterwards was narrowly watched; obscene expressions in former plays were obliged to be expunged; and nothing new was produced before it underwent the examination of a licencer. In consequence of this many were prosecuted by government for uttering profane or indecent expressions,

among whom BETTERTON and Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE were actually fined.

It is to be very much lamented that, when they were prohibiting indecent words, they did not prohibit indecent actions, but the contrary was the case; for all that the plays lost with the profligates by being deprived of what they considered as the *fil puignant*, the posturing and tumbling made up for; which gained ground so fast that at length the company in Lincoln's Inn Fields were obliged in their own defence to adopt the same conduct, and thus they went on, exciting veneration mixed with pity, till VANBRUGH, who had left Drury Lane, suggested, as a new attraction, the building of a splendid house in the Haymarket, for the purpose of performing as well spectacles as plays.

It has been generally imagined, and indeed frequently asserted, that the Italian opera was not attempted in ENGLAND till about the year 1700; but this certainly is not the fact. It was imported soon after BETTERTON took his trip to PARIS for scenes, and this is very natural; for the French finding from that circumstance the avidity with which the English swallowed novelty, sent, as we have seen, first CAMBERT, and afterwards many others, and I have al-

ready noticed that PURCEL, in 1685, complains of this innovation which he says had too long prevailed.

This species of amusement, however, was in no state of perfectness, even so early as 1700, nor, indeed, till here as in France the opera singers possessed an exclusive theatre. The theatre in the Haymarket was built in 1705, and at that time the principal singer, always a eunuch, sung his part in Italian while all the other characters sung and recited their parts in English. VALENTINI was the FARINELLI of that time, and we don't find that the ladies of fashion then, in absurd encouragement, or extravagant praise of what they could neither taste nor understand, were a little behind those of the present time.

Opera, however, was the word; and, without assistance from this auxiliary, it would have been considered as madness to have opened the new theatre. With the combined merit of CONGREVE and VANBRUGH, however, and such other authors as of course would have been glad to shield their reputations under such a protection at a distance from the folly and ignorance that marked the proceedings of the other house, it appears to have been the last step they should have dreamt of. They gave into

the absurdity nevertheless and the theatre opened in great style, with a translated opera to Italian music, called *The Triumph of Love*. Which after all their pains and expence met with a very cool reception.

They now began to see in what their real force consisted; and what they should have done by choice at first they were constrained to do at last. VANBRUGH brought out that pleasant, and indeed valuable comedy, *The Confedery*. Its success, however, did not answer their expectations, and it was now all of a sudden discovered that the fault lay in the construction of the theatre, which was so built, with all VANBRUGH's architectural knowledge, that it was impossible for the auditors to hear any thing distinctly. He brought out three more comedies that year, all of which received applause, and were pretty well followed; but the same complaints was constant and general. The situation of the theatre was also objected to. The Haymarket being at such a distance from the city and the inns of court, and hackney coaches at that time being very indifferent and not so well to be afforded as now. Drury Lane therefore picked up a tolerable audience to hold expence while the Haymarket, with all its grandeur, had empty benches. —

BETTERTON, whether tired of adventuring or of

trouble, in 1607, prevailed upon his co-partners to dissolve their agreement, and place themselves under the direction of CONGREVE and VANBRUGH. BETTERTON himself at this time was passed seventy, Mrs. BETTERTON, and UNDERHILL were superannuated pensioners, and SMITH, KYNASTON, SANDFORD, and LEIGH were dead; while CONGREVE and VANBRUGH, however they might supply the theatre with novelty, were little capable of making engagements with other actors; who, notwithstanding his ill treatment of them, RICH had the cunning to keep to himself. It should seem as if CONGREVE had foreseen all this; for, fairly disgusted with the concern, he brought out nothing but *Semele*, a very short piece, and, making VANBRUGH a present of his share, retired; so that the story of having left the public, through the ill reception of *The Way of the World*, is not true, for that comedy was performed in 1700 at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

These steps having been taken, VANBRUGH found himself unequal to the task of sustaining the whole concern, and heartily wished either to be relieved from it by a purchaser or a coalition with the other theatre. The latter expedient he knew, however, could not be attempted without extreme caution, for that his opponent, in addition to his natural and professional keeness, having had so many diffi-

culties to weather would of course. not only be upon his guard, but feel a degree of triumph and exultation at a prospect of having it in his power, through the medium of a treaty, to dictate arrogant and self-advantageous terms. He, therefore gave the world to understand that nothing was farther from his intention than parting with the concern, but that, in order to have leisure to provide it with novelty, and to look into the more material parts of its conduct, and management, he should have no objection to let it to any person willing to adventure in it, intending at the same time to back it with every assistance in his power, for a valuable consideration.

RICH, in the mean time, we shall presently see to what purpose, was playing a much deeper stake than VANBRUGH. His own private considerations were complex and distressing. He had harrassed his partners with such vexatious demands, and teased them with such continual litigation, put them to such expences, and warded off by chicanery the ill consequences of so many contempts of court, that several of those concerned in the scheme were glad to sell their shares for inconsiderable trifles, which were bought up by RICH's agents with their own money; till at length, sir THOMAS SHIPWITH, the only remaining partner of any consequence gave

away his share to colonel BRETT, who having a good deal interested himself in the management, and brought the concern into some repute, SHIPWITH repented of his generosity and applied to the Court of Chancery for relief; upon which BRETT threw up the matter most heartily disgusted, and the question, lying only between RICH and SHIPWITH, the latter, through superior cunning, was ousted, and the former remained in exclusive possession of the whole property, as I shall shew hereafter more particularly.

All this train of events were agitating when RICH's spies and, indeed public rumour, reported VANBRUGH's inclination to form an alliance, and now came what RICH conceived to be his master stroke. He had for some time retained in his councils the man in the world whom he saw was best calculated to advise him in his perplexed state of mind, but he did not see that he was also the best calculated to over-reach him. To this man, whose name was SWINEY, did RICH open his heart and, as he knew VANBRUGH's earnestness to get rid of the Haymarket, it was agreed that SWINEY should take it, as an interest apparently apart from RICH, but that he should be privately under his controul. An interview was in consequence somehow procured between VANBRUGH and SWINEY, who pretended

that he was anxious to adventure for himself, and it was, after some deliberation and another meeting or two, agreed that SWINEY should take the whole concern off VANBRUGH's hands, upon paying five pounds on every day of performance, the whole sum not to exceed seven hundred a year.

This done, RICH was perfectly at ease. Indeed more so than he ought to have been. He had hoped to have SWINEY under his thumb, and for that purpose, among other holds on him, had taken care that he should be two hundred pounds in his debt. SWINEY, however, for some time kept his compact rigidly, seeing very plainly that, could he once get the town, RICH would be no obstacle to his making a fortune, and this he had no doubt of as he had made it one part of his agreement, which by the way was verbal, to receive whatever discontented actors might think proper to make an asylum of the Haymarket. It was now his business to ingratiate himself with those actors as much as possible; and, having gained over a few whom he took care to pay punctually, others liked this lure so well that at length he got the whole strength of the company led by WILKS, ESTCOURT, MILLS, KEEN, JOHNSON, BULLOCK, Mrs. OLDFIELD, and Mrs. ROGERS, and afterwards CIBBER.



Having now such strength, he pressed RICH to reduce to writing and execute formally the agreement between them, which had stipulated that SWINNEY's name should appear as the manager of the Haymarket theatre, but that they should divide the profits between them. This he seemed the more earnest to accomplish, because he knew RICH too well to believe that he would ever consent to it; for his intention all along was, by his power over SWINNEY, to be able to declare his agreement good or void just as might suit his convenience, after an experiment should have been made of the success of the scheme; and thus, if the Haymarket lost, he might disclaim any share in it, if it gained, he might claim his proportion of the emolument.

SWINNEY would not be put by, he declared for a full partnership or a perfect independence; and, having made his agreement with VANBRUGH, in his own name, who was well enough satisfied with his punctuality thitherto, he fairly put the question to him; upon which an open rupture took place and SWINNEY, whom he had from the beginning intended to use as his tool, became his equal, and his powerful opponent, while his ingenuoufness entitled him to the good opinion of the world.

It now became the general opinion that the two

theatres would respectively carry on their operations, and that a generous emulation would gratify the town and fill their treasuries. RICH. however, became more untractable than ever. The dancers were one time going to leave him out of jealousy of a live elephant, which he had advertised to exhibit, and his rope dancers became so intolerably impudent that, upon an appeal to the audience by the actors, he was obliged to dismiss them. But it is said that it was out of this sort of confusion he enriched himself; that he was uneasy at good success because it made him accountable to his partners, and pleased when every thing went wrong because they must then be accountable to him; and thus, by "law and delay," says CIBBER, "he so tired his enemies that he became sole monarch of his theatrical empire, and left the quiet possession of it to his successors."

It was this kind of litigious spirit that so heartily tired SHIPWORTH, the only remaining opponent of any consequence, that he gave away his share to colonel BRETT; who, being a man of spirit and a leader of the fashionable world, resolved to use a little laudable industry to get the stage into something like reputation. In his conduct he implicitly followed the advice of CIBBER, who, with consummate art and industry, had been treasuring himself all

his life the complete mystery of a manager. He saw that a union of the two companies was the only salvation of their character and their consequence; and BRETT, under CIBBER's direction, availed himself of his intimacy with the Vice Chamberlain to accomplish this desirable end. His scheme was to have one theatre for plays and another for operas, under separate interests; by which means the united force of all the dramatic talents would be concentrated into one company, and spectacle and exhibitions of mere shew and splendour be kept apart in its proper province.

This was all SWINEY wanted. ITALY had by this time heard of English impatience to hear their best fingers. People of fashion had at their own instance invited the famous NICOLINI; and, after a proper and a safe stipulation, regulated by the Lord Chamberlain, that he should receive no molestation from RICH, it was settled that operas should be performed exclusively at the Haymarket, and plays at Drury Lane; to which place all the actors were ordered to return, and perform under the direction of the patentees, and to be considered as her majesty's only company of comedians.

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## CHAP. II.

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ACTORS.

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SINCE RHODES collected his company together, immediately before the Restoration, we have seen nothing of actors or considered their respective merits. It will now be necessary to make up for this time which I will not call lost because I think the subject will be better discussed, by introducing all the subjects into one view than if I had handled it piece meal.

It has been constantly asserted that acting had arrived at its height of perfection in SHAKESPEAR's time: and that LOWIN, TAYLOR, ALLEYN, BURBAGE, and the rest of that set had carried the representation of human manners to the highest pitch of truth and nature. In what way this has been insisted on and for what reasons, the reader has already seen, and it must be confessed the argument is full of feasibility. When we come forwarder this account is corroborated, and at the same time it is in-

fisted that, though the actors between the Restoration and the Revolution were materially inferior to those in the reign of JAMES the first, it is allowed on all hands that they were greatly superior to those which have appeared since.

When the two theatres were established at the Restoration, the King's company was supported as principal performers by HART, MOHUN, BURT, WINTERTON, LACY, CARTWRIGHT, and CLUN, to whom in a short time were added HAINES, GRIFFIN, GOODMAN, and some others. The principal women were Mrs. CORV, Mrs. MARSHALL, Mrs. KNAP, and afterwards Mrs. BOUTEL, and Mrs. ELENOR GWYN. The Duke's company consisted of BETTERTON, SHEPPY, KYNASTON, NOKES, MOSELY, and FLOYD, who had all performed under RHODES. Shortly afterwards they were reinforced by PRICE, RICHARDS, and BLAGDEN, and again by SMITH, SANDFORD, MEDBOURNE and others. The actresses were Mrs. DAVENPORT, Mrs. SAUNDERS, whom BETTERTON married, Mrs. DAVIES, and Mrs. LONG, besides Mrs. GIBBS, Mrs. NORRIS, Mrs. HOLDEN, and Mrs. JENNINGS.

Many of these actors, if we are to believe the most dispassionate and rational accounts of them,

were not mere auricular imitators, not mannerists, not copies of this or that particular whim, fancy, deportment, voice or manner; but judges of nature through all her various workings, and close observers of all the passions that move and actuate the mind of man. Nay more, they were all perfect and complete masters in those different styles of acting in which they chose to display their several abilities.

“ BETTERTON,” says CIBBER, “ was an actor  
“ as SHAKESPEAR was an author, both without  
“ competitors; formed for the mutual assistance and  
“ illustration of each other’s genius. How SHAKES-  
“ PEAR wrote, all men who have a taste for nature  
“ may read and know; but with what higher rapture  
“ would he still be read could they conceive how  
“ BETTERTON played him! Then might they know  
“ that one was born alone to speak what the other  
“ only knew to write.” There are so many vouchers for the merit of this extraordinary actor, that there would be no great difficulty in ascertaining, or risk in asserting precisely what they were. I must content myself, however, with saying that it has been unanimously allowed, his personal and mental qualifications for the stage were correct to perfection, and that, after a variety of arguments to prove this, we are obliged to confess that he appears never to

have been on the stage for a single moment the actor but the character he performed\*.

KYNASTON who performed the parts of women in his youth, of lovers in his maturer age, and of genteel old men later in life, is said to have not only possessed a grace and an ease that nothing ever surpassed, but to have thrown a peculiar dignity into every thing he performed. We are told that, though BETTERTON and KYNASTON both observed the rules of truth and nature, they were each as different in their acting as in their form or features. This we

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\* In the early part of my life, I was very fond of every thing dramatic, and particularly curious to learn whatever I could relative to the Old School, as it was then called, but which appellation is now given to the School of GARRICK. During the the two last years of RICH's life, old Steed, who was at that time eighty, and who had been many years prompter of Covent Garden theatre, was my theatrical mentor. On some of his observations I shall, as necessity may occur, remark, as well as avail myself of anecdotes with which he furnished me. He was, as may be imagined, a most fervid advocate for the preceding race of performers, and did not spare RICH, who in imitation of his father had lowered the stage by pantomimes and buffoonery. This was the very time when RICH was getting up the Coronation. I heard, therefore, of course all his sentiments which, though somewhat bigoted, were pretty candid, and his opinion of BETTERTON was, that, though he allowed all his various merits as they had been described by CIBBER and his other admirers, yet taking every thing into consideration he was by no means equal to GARRICK.

know is requisite, and this particular discrimination seems to have made up a great part of the excellent acting of that time.

MONTFORD has a very warm character given of him by those who knew him. His person was very fine and his voice melodious and winning. STEED used to compare him to BARRY, but considered him as a superior actor, for that he was equally excellent when as the conqueror of the world he sued to STRATTA for pardon, and when in *Miracle* he gave additional brilliancy to the bon mots of CONCREVE. He is said to have had so much in him of the agreeable, that when he played Mrs. BEHN's dissolute character of the Rover, it was remarked by many, and particularly by queen MARY, that it was dangerous to see him act he made vice so alluring.

SANDFORD is supposed to have been the completest and most natural performer of a villain that ever existed. One would think, had it been possible, that SHAKESPEAR, when he made King John excuse his intention of perpetrating the death of Arthur by his comments on Hubert's face, by which he saw the assassin in his mind, had SANDFORD in idea, for he was rather deformed and had a most for-



bidding countenance. The town, therefore, though the private character of this actor was perfectly amiable, could never endure him in any part in which there was the remotest similitude to honour or fair dealing\*.

Such, with all the reiterated praises that language can furnish, were the commendations given to these and other actors of tragedy by their contemporaries, and in those praises we see so much justice and propriety that we are obliged to acknowledge their extraordinary merit. The comic performers by the same accounts did not lag a whit behind their brothers of the buskin in fame and reputation. NOKES is described as an actor of so plain and palpable a simplicity, so perfectly his own, that

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\* STEED related to me a whimsical instance of this. In a new play, the author had allotted SANDFORD a character full of rectitude and the most honourable sentiments. The audience, who had been accustomed to see SANDFORD in parts of a contrary cast, imagined that all this honesty was put on, and therefore applauded the author for his art and management in having drawn the character of a villain in such dissuulating colours, as would give great novelty and force to the denouement. But when they came to find that no friend had been betrayed, no ruin plotted, no destruction accomplished, but on the contrary that SANDFORD turned out as honest a man at last as at first, they fairly damned the play as an imposition upon their understandings.

he was as diverting in his common speech as on the stage. It is told of him that a nobleman, hearing him relate to the performers behind the scenes a conversation that he had been witness of the day before, asked if he was repeating a new part.

NOKES it is said was so perfectly original that ESTCOURT, with all those powers of mimicry for which he was so famous could not catch the slightest glimpse of him, and the reason is plain. Mimics can imitate nothing but affected peculiarities, NOKES had none of these. Very elaborate descriptions have been given, by CIBBER and others, to shew that he went through a large diversity of parts, and described feelings and passions in a manner so faithful to nature that his comic distresses could not have been more natural had they arisen in himself and taken birth in his own mind, which is saying in other words that he was never NOKES but the character he assumed.

LATCH was fraught with humour of a more luxuriant kind. He was full of variety and perfectly just to whatever character he represented. His merit, however was rather assumption than reality; which, for characters full of peculiarities, is, in performers of quick conception and strong intel-

lects, a good species of acting ; for, through this forcible mode of colouring, they heighten parts but faintly drawn, and add fresh force to those already prominent. This was LEIGH's peculiar forte. He gave so strong an effect to the sly and demure wickedness of the Spanish Friar, in those scenes where he connived at the intrigue between Lorenzo and the wife of Gomez, and was so stern and so overbearing when the situation required an exertion of clerical pride and sacerdotal insolence, that the poet's outline of the character would have been nothing without this admirable finish by the actor ; and, upon other occasions he lifted parts into consequence as much above their usual level as he exalted this and others beyond even the conception of those who wrote them.

UNDERHILL was something between NOKES and LEIGH. He was true to nature in his acting both from adventitious endowments and good sense. He performed those parts which, though they are considered as secondary in plays, require very frequently more judgment than those which are called principal, and at the same time demand a mode of acting perfectly consistent and natural. Such characters are the very sinews of a play, and ought to be knit by the author with strength, and exerted by the actor with

judgment. These parts are the fathers and guardians, such for instance as Sir Sampson Legend in *Love for Love*. He was also remarkable in the Grave-digger in *Hamlet*, and the *Tatler* recommends him to the town upon that play's being acted for his benefit.

These actors of whom I have thought it necessary to give this description were the flower of that company which united in 1694, at which time, as I have already observed. HARR, who also was an excellent actor, had left the stage. MONTUN was dead, and several others were either dead or had retired. GOODMAN, CLARK, and many more might also be spoken of with great propriety, for it is a remarkable thing, which by the way I never saw since I have known the stage but in the time of GARRICK, and never correctly with him except in those plays he acted himself, that let their situations be principal or subordinate it was their study to be respectable. The underlings felt like apprentices at a trade of which every one hoped to become in time a master. They thought it the height of absurdity to expect to arrive at perfection till it could be gradually attained; they considered it as building in the air and ornamenting the superstructure before they had laid the foundation, and the position is so just, that I'll

venture to say half the crudities which we have been so often astonished and disgusted at, and which at length get into hardiesses and take every form but nature, are entirely owing to first appearances in principal characters; but I leave with the recollection of the public how many who have pursued this dangerous road ever arrived to the achme of their art.

This observation applies to women in particular who have very seldom arrived to perfection as actresses before the female graces have in some degree left them. "The short life of beauty," says an author, "is not long enough to form a complete actress," and the separate merits of almost every actress I shall have to dwell on will bear out this assertion. Before, however, I enter upon that task I shall go on with my account of the actors till 1708.

POWELL, who was added to the company soon after its union felt an early ambition to perform capital parts; and, when RICH quarrelled with his actors and BARTERTON had it in his idea to leave him, with the utmost presumption POWELL agreed to accept of his characters, some of which he took possession of and almost the whole of MONTFORD's, when WILKS having arrived from IRELAND, was

expected to do wonders. This is the strongest light I can put the merit of these actors into. WILKS whose abilities, which were promising though raw and unformed, would have sunk to nothing upon a comparison with BETTERTON and MONTFORD, became a successful rival to POWEL, who in dudgeon walked off to Lincoln Inn Fields. WILKS, however, improved every day, and in time, in spite of some peculiarities, became an excellent actor; while POWELL, after trying one winter with BETTERTON, where he was more lost than ever, returned to his old quarters, and after a short contention fairly gave up the palm to his competitor.

WILKS was a sober industrious man, and POWEL a very different character; circumstances which, in particular after COLLIER'S book, weighed considerably in the opinion of the public. It is remarkable that BOOTH, who, in the very year WILK, left DUBLIN for Drury Lane, left it also for Lincoln's Inn Fields, and who had in IRELAND been a pretty free lover of the bottle, was, some time after his arrival in LONDON, so shocked at the contempt and distress that POWEL had plunged himself into by the vice of hard drinking, that he instantly made a resolution, which he never broke, of utterly abandoning that practice, and to this circumstance there can be

no doubt but the world are indebted for so admirable an actor.

VERBRUGGEN, PINKETHMAN, WILLIAMS, BULLOCK, and others, were actors of considerable merit in their way, and DOCKET, more generally known to us by his coat and badge than his acting, is said to have possessed such natural comic powers that it was CONGREVE's delight to write for him; but I shall have better occasion to mention him hereafter, when I describe him as manager in conjunction with CIBBER and WILKS, at which time I shall deliver my sentiments of CIBBER, a man whose whole life was acting and management, who knew dramatic conduct intuitively, who without any very striking requisites, either as an author or as an actor, held a very respectable situation in both capacities, and who seems to have seen so far into the womb of time as to discover when he had only fifteen shillings a week, that he should one day have a thousand a year as a manager besides his emoluments as an author.

Having taken a cursory view of the actors I shall now speak of the different merits of the actresses, among whom Mrs. BARRY seems to claim the preference, and of whom DRYDEN says in his

preface to *Cleomenes*. "Mrs BARRY always excellent has in this tragedy excelled herself, and gained "a reputation beyond any woman I have seen on "the theatre." We are told that, however DRYDEN might have been charmed with this lady at that time, and however truly she might have deserved his panegyric, she was by no means arrived to that perfection that she afterwards attained. that if her acting was then meritorious, it was afterwards incomparable, and that for nearly forty years she continued to improve in judgment and discrimination; a strong proof of the observation I quoted just now.

Mrs. BARRY in characters of greatness is said to have been graceful, noble and dignified; that no violence of passion was beyond the reach of her feelings, and that in the most melting distress and tenderness she was exquisitely affecting. Thus she was equally admirable in *Cassandra*, *Cléopatra*, *Roxana*, *Monimia*, or *Belvidera*. She was the first actress who was indulged with a benefit play, a favour for some time after given only as a distinction of merit.

Mrs. BETTERTON was remarkable for performing the female characters of SHAKESPEAR to a  
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greater degree of excellence than any other actresses before or since, which exhibits a most striking proof that she must have been critically a judge of nature; for, though many of them are purposely underwritten because they were performed in SHAKESPEAR'S time by men, yet there is a feminine truth and beauty in them more winning than all we find in those overcharged characters which, in some of the more modern tragedies, a mode we have borrowed from the French, seem to have all the conduct of the piece. The fact is that, when women come to grace the stage, the authors were so delighted at this pleasurable and advantageous circumstance, that they did not know how to husband it, but as much overshot the mark as their predecessors had come short of it. It is related of Mrs. BETTERTON that, though Lady Macbeth had been frequently well performed, no actresses, not even Mrs. BARRY, could in the smallest degree be compared to her. Her judgment as an actress is said to have been so consummate that no female performer succeeded who did not imitate her, or failed who did.

Mrs. LEIGH was a comic performer and eminently successful in such parts as Lady Wishfort. Mrs. BUTLER was equally excellent in Coquettes, but Mrs. MONTFORD, and Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE;

were most admirable comic actresses indeed. It is supposed that no actresses ever performed so variously as Mrs. MONTFORD. She had every species of native humour at command, she was equally natural in characters of high and low life, and would with the same ease and fidelity personate an affected coquette in a drawing room, and a dowdy in a cottage; to all which she added the talents of being a most inimitable mimic, and is said to have played Bayes in the *Rehearsal* upon a particular occasion, probably a benefit, with more variety than had ever been thrown into it before.

Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE, a name that has always been mentioned with great respect, both on account of her public merit, and her private virtues, rendered herself a valuable ornament to the theatre, and to society. She had many admirers, and authors, when they have vied with each other in scenes of tenderness, are said to have written them only to make their court to her. As to her acting both authors and performers courted the assistance of her talents, which were universal. She equally delighted in melting tenderness, and playful coquetry, in *Statira*, or *Millamant*, and even at an advanced age, when she played Angelica in *Love for Love*, for BETTERTON'S benefit, she retained all her power of pleasing.

Having noticed six actresses who made up, in CIBBER's opinion, together with those actors I have mentioned from BETTERTON to UNDERHILL, thirteen performers, who for great, various, and extraordinary talents never had or could have their equal, I shall defer introducing Mrs. OLDRIELD, Mrs. ROGERS, and those other females, who were at this time coming forward, by way of a gradual succession, and who when the companies were united in 1708, had given no mean proof of their progress towards perfection.

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## CHAP. III.

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SHADWELL, SEDLEY, &c. RESUMED.

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SHADWELL brought out *The Squire of Alfatia*, in the very year of the Revolution. This play is founded upon the *Adephi* of TERENCE; and, for a subject that had then and has been since to repeatedly treated, it is by no means a bad play. There is, however, too much of the low and the vulgar in it, and when it was revived by WOODWARD on his return from Ireland, though it was admirably acted, it on this account was soon withdrawn. It had originally so much cant, or what is vulgarly called slang, that the author was obliged to add a glossary to the publication.

*Bury Fair*, 1689, was borrowed from the Duke of NEWCASTLE's *Triumphant Widow*, and *Les Precieuses Ridicules* of MOLIERE. DAVENANT, BETTERTON, and Mrs BEHN, nibbled at the same bait,

which, however it might catch them, was not so easily swallowed by their audiences. The *Amorous Bigot*. This was a party play which, speaking of the circumstance of Teague O'Divelly, I have described in another place. The *Scowerers*, 1693, was his last play, and, perhaps, the most indifferent of them all, which will be credited when the reader is informed that it is much lower and more vulgar than the *Squire of Alsatia*, without half so good a vehicle to convey effect or interest. Let us then take leave of SHADWELL; a writer certainly of merit enough to convince the world that, however, if personality were allowable, FLECKNOE deserved in his own right DRYDEN'S most caustic satire, the the ridicule aimed at SHADWELL, had less in it of truth and justice, than envy and disappointment.

The dramatic pieces of SEDLEY after the Revolution were *Beauty the Conqueror, or the Death of Marc Anthony*, which was written on the Roman model, and therefore never acted. The *Grumbler*, which did very ill at first, and worse since, when it was cut down to a farce, and *The Tyrant King of Crete* a play which though published in this author's works was never performed. The character of SEDLEY cannot be known from his plays, which, like the productions of the fine gentlemen of that

time, were chiefly written for amusement. The latter part of his life was decorous, and indeed exemplary. He was, however, a *bon vivant*, to the last, and died as a poet expresses it, “with a jest in his mouth and a tear in his eye.”

LEE produced, 1689, *The Princess of Cleves*, and in 1690, *The Massacre of Paris*. His best dramatic merit was however past: The first of these plays, though it has fits and starts of fire and energy is declamatory and desultory, and the other has too much frenzy and too little regularity, but we must not wonder at this, for these two plays were written after he had been confined in Bedlam four years, to which place his strong mind and his excess of sensibility forced him; a circumstance that ought to respite many an indiscriminate denunciation ready to issue from the lips of uncandid critics, in favour of that hard, that difficult, that thankless toil which men of genius endure, when for precarious fame they generously diffuse the light of knowledge to cheer their fellow creatures.

SETTLE produced eight plays after the Revolution. *Distressed Innocence, or the Princess of Persia*, had good success; it is impossible, however, to add deservedly. The author acknowledges many

obligations to BETTERTON and MOUNTFORD, who wrote between them several scenes in it. If this indifferent play succeeded, to ballance accounts, *The Ambitious Slave*, a piece of more merit, was damned. *Philaster* was of course BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's play with alterations; but they were not judicious, and what was more unfortunate the town thought so. These three plays were performed 1691, 1694, and 1695. *The World in the Moon*, 1697, was a kind of opera, which SETTLE wrote to curry favour with RICH, to whom it was dedicated. It was brought out to display decoration, and so far answered the intended purpose.

*The Virgin Prophets*, 1701, is a strange mad play, written from the story of *Cassandra*. It was a kind of opera; but it did very little, notwithstanding RICH, who was at that time using SETTLE as one of his tools, did his utmost to push it forward. *The City Ramble*, stolen from the *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and some *Drolls* written for Bartholomew Fair, conclude the works of ELKINAH SETTLE, playwright, critic, turncoat, shewman, city poet, and to close his character, panegyrist of Judge JEFFERIES.

DURFEE produced after the Revolution sixteen

pieces of different descriptions, most of which were mutilated from other authors, or else a compound of their writings. It would be very unprofitable to follow them up with any close remarks. *Love for Money*, which was stolen from several things, and from which COFFEY stole his *Boarding School Ramps*, *Marriage Hater Match d.* remarkable for nothing but bringing DOGGET into public notice, whose admirable performance of a very bad part only kept it on its legs for six nights; *Cynthia and Endymion*, who Mr. DURFEE, by way of compliment, makes DOMA a strumpet, and Syrens something worse. *Buffy D'Amboise*, spoilt from *Chapman* and *Maffaniello* from the *Rebellion of Naples*, make up a part of them. the rest were known by the following titles, *Richmond Heiress*, *Don Quixote*, three parts, *Intrigues of Versailles*, *Campaigners*. *The Beth*, *Wonders in the Sun*, *Modern Prophets*, *The Old Mode and the New*, *The Two Queens of Bremsford* *The Grecian Hero* and *Arindae*. In short every body liked DURFEE as a companion, and, therefore, wished him to get a subsistence, and thus what his friends were obliged to deduct from the merit of the fact, they were glad to accord to the good nature of the man.

There are five plays to come which were written



by CROWNE. *Darius*, 1688, *The English Friars*, 1690, *Regulus*, 1694, *The Married Beau*, 1694, *Caligula*, 1698, and *Justice Busy*, which was not printed, nor can the date be ascertained. None of these plays were equal either in the writing or success to those which went before them. CROWNE's forte was by no means tragedy, and his subjects, being merely from remote history, and conducted upon the plan of *Seneca*, without the erudition or the discrimination of JONSON, no wonder they sunk under their own burden. As for his comedies he should have stooped at *Sir Courtly Nice*, for by this time the reformers got to work, and he among the rest was forced into a vindication of his conduct, and an apology for the looseness of his morals.

BANKS brought out *The Innocent Usurper* in 1694, and *Cyrus the Great* in 1696. Both of these plays were forbidden. The first under an idea that it reflected on government, and the other nobody knows why; but BANKS, though an indifferent writer, had so peculiar a mode of introducing pathetic and touching situation, that the venal, the unprincipled, and the ambitious, got at length a knack of tingling at that imaginary rod which they fancied, while he depicted nature, he held up at them.

BANKS wrote a very proper, but an unavailing vindication of himself in relation to the *Innocent Usurper*, which is the story of Lady Jane Gray. and which has more pathos, though it is not so well written, than Rowe's tragedy upon the same subject; but as for *Cyrus*, government seemed to take shame to itself for having been frightened at a shadow- for how so remote and so inapplicable a story could affect them, unless upon the broad principle that all men in power are equally vulnerable on the score of venality, it is not very easy to explain. The author, however, was still unfortunate; for a short time after it had been restored to the stage, the representation of *Cyrus* died, since when the author withdrew him and his play from the public.

Two plays written by Mrs. BEHN remain to be spoken of. Their titles are *The Widow Ranter*, and *The Younger Brother*. The first of these came out in 1690. It is a tragi-comedy, and a most incongruous business indeed. This is not, however, wonderful, for if what we have examined already, written in the prime of life, were so full of the eccentric, it is very unlikely that her mental faculties were grown stronger a year or two before her death, at which time this piece was produced. DAVENANT, upon the production of this piece, furnished a prologue to it,

which, as DAYES says, might have served for any other. for there is not a single allusion to the play from the beginning to the end.

The *Younger Brother*, though not produced till after Mrs. PINN'S death, does not labour under the same predicament, for she took uncommon pains with it, and had been ten years preparing it for the stage. It had however very little success, the literary atmosphere was now purifying very fast, and therefore became unable to sustain those gross bodies that had been accustomed to float in it; and, as Mrs. BENN was one of the projectors that sported these sulphurous balloons, no wonder that she, the very *Rosier de l'etat* of the tube, should experience a chute\*.

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\* Having spoken in unqualified terms on the subject of Mrs. BENN, I may perhaps be blamed, by those who think it squeamish to lay it in open to the bold, naked, ferocious virtue, which was practicable in SPARTA, and which MRS. WOOLSTONCROFT would have made us believe to be practicable in ENGLAND; so much I shall allow, reserving to myself some exceptions that literature would have earned something and domestic happiness a great deal, had fewer ladies invented epistles and fondly fancied they had written poetry. As to MRS. BENN, I shall wind up her character with a parody written by a friend of mine.

Farewell APRIL, and from thy shameless end  
May females fair from poetry be warned.

Three plays were written by RAVENSCROFT, after the Revolution, under the titles of *The Canterbury Guest*, which had no success; *The Anatomist*, a poor attempt at a play, but which by turning the Doctor into a Frenchman was played first at a benefit, and afterwards occasionally on account of some whim entirely owing to the person who altered it, probably an actor, and *The Italian Husband*, a most shocking and revolting performance, conceived for no other purpose than to create unnecessary terror, without a point a drift, or tolerable writing to support it, or indeed without transparent bloody hands, painted face, or any of those embellishments which have so frequently filled large houses to the great terror of children at Christmas, pregnant women, and the consumption of hartshorn and sal volatile. This subject was taken up in 1754, in a way ten times more terrific by WILLIAM LEWIS. The particulars will come in their place, and now having so far cleared my way nothing remains to prevent my finishing my examination of the productions of DRYDEN.

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Had thy licentious pen but staid in virtue  
 With half the industry it raked in vice,  
 How would thy comedies have graced the theatre,  
 But as it is, what pages thou hast blotted.

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## CHAP. VI.

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 DRYDEN RESUMED
 

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As the most disgraceful part of examining DRYDEN relates to his plays and the controversies that sprung from them, let us get over those that we may have the gratification of according him more fully that tribute of praise and admiration which as a poet are eminently due to his wonderful and extraordinary talents.

*Don Sebastian*, performed in 1690, is by some esteemed DRYDEN's best play, whence however this judgment has arisen cannot be easily conceived; for, though there is some fine, spirited, and poetic writing in it, there is also so much incongruity and extraneousness that, for conduct, surely it is certainly one of the worst. In the first place it is admitted that it is so long that it cannot be acted all at once, and what sort of praise must that writer intend who subscribes at the same time to the excellence of

this play, and insists that there are comic scenes relative to the distresses of princes and the vicissitudes of empires which that age did not commend, and this would not indure. It is in fact what DRYDEN's plays generally are, it contains writing which might add lustre to a great author, and conduct that might disgrace an indifferent one.

*Amphytrion* next came forward, it was performed in 1691. The reader knows the play, that it is a mixture of *PLAUTUS* and *MOTIPEL*. and that it has great merit, but the merit is entirely on the side of the writing, and even that is injurious to this production, considered as a dramatic piece, in proportion as it is beautiful and seducing. The whole conduct of it is so profligate and openly licentious, that though it has been often revived and embellished in various ways, its success has never answered the experiment. The universal report of it is that it is not a lady's play, and why, after so just a character of it has been given, has it ever been foisted on the public with all its sin, upon its head. Jupiter's committing adultery and executing it to *Amphytrion* by informing him that *Hercules* would be the issue of his intercourse with *Alcmena*, upon which *Socia* dryly remarks "that these gods know how to gild a bitter pill," besides the peculiar glance it takes at a

most sacred fact, is as profligate as the circumstance of the pirate; who, after he had landed upon an island and robbed a church in the night, upon seeing a fair breeze spring up, to cover his escape, "See," said he to the crew, "how the gods favour sacrilege."

In this play, though in the provokingly laughable humour of *Socia*, DRYDEN has falsified his own sentiments of himself, for it proves that he was a judge of whatever was truly comic, and though there is some of the sweetest writing that can be imagined, its whole tendency is immoral and irreligious. Jupiter congratulates himself on his meditated conquest on Alcmena, and praises the consummate sagacity which he had used in forming woman, which describes her as every thing the reverse of amiable, for he says he gave her two sweet eyes to grant, and but one mouth to say nay, but let us have done with *Amphytrion*, a subject which has been treated ineffectually by eminent writers of all ages, and which proves, therefore, that it is not in human ability to make that perfect which is radically wrong.

*Arthur* was produced also in the year 1691. This piece, and the beautiful music of PURCELL that embellishes it, are so perfectly in every body's

recollection that it will be very little necessary to dwell on it. The piece itself is extravagant, but it is a masque, and in it DRYDEN has had many opportunities to display his abilities as a lyric poet, style in which he ever so eminently excelled. It cannot, therefore, be ranked as the meanest of his dramatic works; and, when we add the captivating melodies of PURCELL, it exhibits a very strong claim to public admiration, for nothing has, perhaps, more universally excelled, or will be longer admired than *Love's Labour's Lost*, *I call all you to Woden's Hill*, *Come if you dare*, *To Arms*, and *Britons Strike Home*.

*Cleomenes*. This tragedy, which appeared in 1692, has, like the rest of DRYDEN's works, some remarkable fine passages. It was deemed in such a way as evinced a foreboding about his enemies which was equal to a tacit confession of its merit. This warmth of invective against it was particularly noticeable at court, which induced many box loungers to sneer at the piece and its author. The *Gazetteer* relates that, as DRYDEN came one night from the representation of *Cleomenes*, he was accosted by some young fop of fashion with these words, "Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have spent my time like your Spar-



“tan.” “That fir is true, perhaps,” said DRYDEN ;  
“but give me leave to tell you, you are no  
“hero !”

*Love Triumphant*, the last of DRYDEN's dramatic pieces, has great merit, but it is only in places. On the whole, by the author's own confession, it is defective. It should seem as if DRYDEN, having set it down as an axiom that the stage was not his talent, took it altogether for granted, and therefore did not push his merit as far as it would go ; for it cannot be, had he taken sufficient pains to have weeded his plays of those gross improprieties which he calls his shame, but his dramatic fame would have stood upon much higher ground. *All for Love*, and *The Spanish Friar*, in their way, rank very forward indeed, and manifest extraordinary proofs of transcendant merit. The apology for DRYDEN has constantly been that he undertook to bring out four plays in a year ; CIBBER, however, says two, and even this is more than the fact ; for, upon an examination of the dates, we shall find that twenty-seven plays were performed in thirty years, and though he worked very hard in 1672, and 1673. except in two instances, he brought out no more than one play in any other given year.

This certainly, considering his other pursuits,

was more than enough; and, when we add that what a man does for mere bread, especially if he has not an opinion of his talents for that sort of work, comes not from the mind with such willingness nor such ability as other efforts, the children of inclination, the wonder will be not how he wrote so ill but how he wrote so much, and, if we did not estimate the matter in this way, how completely DRYDEN's merit would kick the beam weighed against SHAKESPEAR, who certainly produced in twenty-five years thirty-seven plays, out of which *The Comedy of Errors*, *Hamlet*, and *King John*, were written in a year so were *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *As you Like It*; and with the difference of a short interval *Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Whenever we consider this, and also consider what plays they were, it is ridiculous to rest DRYDEN's defence on the mere plea of time. We shall presently be able to find a much better; in the interim we will take leave of his plays observing that the worst of them has more of the true merit of a great and extraordinary writer, than the best of the major part of his contemporaries.

Before I look a little into the other works of DRYDEN, which I lament that I must do in a very

any way, it may not be amiss to see how far his poetry improved his fortune, in which enquiry we shall have the mortification to find that they did not relieve him from that that of exigency and dependence of which he always complains, and from which he never was free. He had but one night at any time for a play, though SOUTHERN shortly after him had two, and ROWE soon after him had three, and as it has been calculated that play, dedication, and copy did not yield him upon an average more than a hundred pounds, what a slender income he must have depended upon to have lived like a gentleman and have maintained a family, for his poems, in proportion, must have been as unproductive, especially if he wrote them all upon the same terms, for we find a document which proves that he sold ten thousand verses to TONSON the bookseller for two hundred and fifty guineas, about the twentieth of what POPE received for the same number of lines in his translation of the *Iliad*.

To go into the subject of DRYDEN's poems at any length would be here particularly obtrusive, a circumstance, perhaps, at which I ought to rejoice, because of the difficulty in doing justice to writings of such inestimable value. His original poetry was

often occasional, and, therefore, unfortunately like his dedications, too full of that literal fiction, which, as we have seen in the case of WALLER, is not the true province of poetry. To congratulate a monarch on his restoration to his honours, and his native country, or a nation on the birth of a prince, may fill a poet's mind with every becoming kind of fervour, but the impossibility of conducting such subjects, except through the medium of hyperbole and exaggeration, is evident, and such artifices, therefore become little more than dedications in verse.

Other subjects however, though occasional, were more general, and in these the poet has had a wider field to expatiate in. To prophecy how a king will govern, or what will be the endowments of a young prince, is an effort attended with difficulty and hazard; but to dwell on the valour of generals who have nobly fought, and have been loudly applauded, as the deliverers of their country, is grateful, worthy, and patriotic, and, therefore, the *Annus Abrahamus* has every thing to exalt and nothing to humiliate the poet, while the *Astræa Redux* and the *Britannia Rediviva* stamp on the beauty of poetry the blush of venality, and lose the writer in the *Hypocrite*.

*Abulom and Achitophel.* and *The Hind and the*

*Panther*, are occasional in another way. One is national, the other religious, and may be both termed Satires. These subjects were very warm in his mind, and seem to be written with great honesty, and an unshackled independence. The first is aimed at the faction, which through Lord SHARRSBURY attempted to place the crown on the head of the Duke of MONMOUTH, and the other is a defence of the religion which he appears to have embraced from principle. Taken as a poem, the first has infinitely the preference; the allusions have no violence, no incongruity, no inconsistency, the satire is strong, but it is manly, and the cause is becoming and meritorious. In the other the vehicle, which, if the subject were rendered allusively, would, perhaps, well bear out the author, defeats its own end. The *Blind and Panther* might have been figuratively religious bigots, and in that quality maintained their own tenets, which would have afforded instruction with great propriety through the medium of allegory; but, when beasts are made to speak of our Saviour and his apostles the scripture, St. Paul the Pope, Luther Jehu and Zuinglius, the spotted Panther instantly assumes a gown and cassock, and the milk white hind shelters herself behind a friar's cowl. Take the first of these productions, however, as poetry, and the other as poetical writing, it is ex-

extremely difficult to say which contains superior beauty, or where again, in this language such beauty can be found.

In the *Medal*, and *Religio Laici*, the same subjects are followed up, but with different success; for the *Medal* is inferior to *Absalom and Achitophel*, to which it seems intended as the superstructure, and *Religio Laici* is superior to the *Hind and Panther*, having more subject, and better foundation.

The *Heroic Stanzas on the death of Oliver Cromwell*, The *Poem on the death of Charles the Second*, which was less happy, The *Satire on the Dutch*, and *Mac Flecknoe*, are also among his occasional writings. In all these he has shewn a great deal of poetical dexterity, and, upon the same principle that he pursued in his prefaces and dedications, he has lavished pointed satire, or warm praise, with a strength and a diversity only known to his mind, and performed by his pen. It is but too true that the same was often invective, and the praise adulation; the two subjects of all others most repugnant to liberality, and independence of spirit; yet in this, as well as in many other things, the writer seems to have prevailed over the man, as if there was no task, however revolting and ungrateful, but great talents and great ability

would render creditable and advantageous, though the motives of these productions, and the sentiments they contain are an injury to the private character of DRYDEN, they add a strength and a splendor to his public reputation.

The principal original works of DRYDEN are, *The Epistles*, *The Prologues and Epilogues*, *The Songs*, *Elegies*, and *Epitaphs*, *The Secular Masque*, *The Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, and *Alexander's Feast*. These are all sweetly poetical, and in them the mind seems to have been more at home; and, though they may some of them be considered as occasional, yet they were chosen, not enjoined, and therefore they are more effusion than employment. Many of the epistles shew that he had panegyric at will for his friends as well as for his patrons, and that, however necessity might have induced him occasionally to flatter, inclination balanced the account by giving him opportunity to be just. His epistles and his elegies therefore seem not to have more beauty than sincerity. and as to his prologues, and epilogues, all the world must agree with CONGREVE, that if he had written nothing else they would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in its kind.

*The Secular Masque* is a trifle, but it is a beau-

tiful one. The song alone of *With Horns and with Hounds*, which BOYCE has so deliciously set, is the essence of lyric poetry contained in eight lines. The *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, is an exquisite poem and wonderfully well adapted for music. The description of the different instruments, which the poetry commands to be predominant, is a beautiful outline for the composer, which, however, HANDEL knew not how to take advantage of, whose music everywhere manifests that he had but little taste for the charms of poetry, and therefore this exquisite production has never been seen in a dress adequate to its beauty.

As for *Alexander's Feast*, it will be the less requisite to expatiate on its excellence since all the world feels, and all the critics allow, which is a marvellous conjunction, that it stands without a rival, to which has been added that, if it is excelled in parts, those parts are only to be found in the works of DRYDEN. I must again lament that such a jewel fell into the hands of such a musician. This, however, is not the place, nor am I yet ripe for my observations on HANDEL; they will come better hereafter. One author calling this poem DRYDEN's wonderful Ode, says that it is worth all that PINDAR



DAR has written, as a large diamond is worth a vast heap of gold, but I must not indulge myself with enumerating the universal praise that has been bestowed on this effort of inspiration, which has been extolled by friends and enemies. Even POPE, "tremblingly alive all o'er," is constrained to squeeze out the truth, which he has done in his *Essay on Criticism*, ending, with the imperfect line;

And what TIMOTHEUS was is DRYDEN now.

The translations and paraphrases of DRYDEN, as the world knows, are numerous and valuable, but it must be deplored that great natural talents, and strong inventive faculties should be employed on such drudgery, which, according to the admitted criterion of what translation ought to be, is a fitter task for some moping pedant in a college; for we are told that no translation can be perfect unless the author is rendered line by line. "A translator," says doctor JOHNSON, "is to be like his author; it is "not his business to excel him." This was a servility however that DRYDEN disdained, for which he has been ridiculed by MILBOURNE, and other critics, and thanked by all men of liberality of sentiment, for he was the first that came at the soul of the poet and made him write in English, preserving all the

beauty and only exchanging the language, but with all this the world would have been more gratified if instead of translating the epic poetry of VIRGIL, he had given us an epic poem of his own, which he meditated, and which would, of course, have been a noble ornament of English literature\*.

*Juvenal*, and *Perfius*, were clearly jobs for hire; and, though the hand of a master is every where discernable, yet for the reputation of such a poet as DRYDEN it were almost to be wished they had all gone under names of his sons, whom upon this occasion he ushered into public notice, and who certainly translated some of the satires of *Juvenal*. This was not the case, however in relation to *Virgil*, for, without DRYDEN'S Version of him, ENGLAND would never, perhaps, properly have known that

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\* The subject on which DRYDEN intended to have written an epic poem was neither *ARTHUR*, or *EDWARD the Black Prince*. The agency he intended to use in the construction of this poem, a circumstance which he considered as indispensibly necessary, was the interference of the Guardian Angels of kingdoms, which tradition had warranted a belief of, and which might be used without assistance from mythology or injury to religion. Nothing could be so grateful to the mind as this medium. DRYDEN reported his design to Lord DORSET, in his dedication of one of the Books of *Juvenal*, and he charged *BLACKMORE* with stealing the plan, only says he, "The Guardian Angels of Kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage."

elegant poet ; but the world's admiration has superseded the necessity or the possibility of any thing that can be said new in praise of this elaborate and truly valuable work.

One thing is most obviously in favour of DRYDEN in this undertaking. VIRGIL must be of all authors the most difficult to translate, because his chief, nay, it is almost generally allowed, his only merit consists of his style, and nothing can be so hard as to convey mere style from language to language. This task was not properly speaking congenial to the mind of DRYDEN. His talents came more in contact with those of HOMER. They were heaven born, and full of great and intuitive beauty, rather than the beauty of measured grace and studied refinement. POPE said that if DRYDEN had lived to have finished Homer he would not have attempted it after him, which argued great wisdom in him ; but, had they changed hands, had DRYDEN completed Homer, and left Virgil to POPE, at least the *Æneid*, each of these writers would have been more at home. In a word to translate Homer requires a great poet, while Virgil may be rendered by a good versifier. DRYDEN's having, therefore, so greatly succeeded as to produce a Virgil, which POPE honestly declares to be the most noble and spirited

translation in any language, must have shewn that, great as his genius was, his judgement did not lag behind it.

HIS *Fables*, as they are called, which were his translations, imitations, and paraphrases from OVID, BOCCACE, CHAUCER, and others, were his last work, and from their novelty, for they were the first attempt to render a style of writing familiar in ENGLAND that had made up the beauty of Italian literature, they were greatly and deservedly admired at first, which admiration, upon frequent repetition, grew into fame. We will here then leave DRYDEN as a poet. To enumerate all his merits would be as difficult as it is unnecessary. Every man of real taste cannot be without feeling their force. Let us therefore, while envious critics snarl and cavil at scarce faults, difficulty selected from crowded beauties, and idly dispute whether his incomparable Ode be lyric or dithyrambic, feel its charms and rejoice that it is poetry, and that it emanated from the mind of man who, "except some human errors," as POPE has it, enlightened and adorned the English nation.

The works of DRYDEN, in prose, are his Dedications, and Prefaces, his Controversial Writings, the Lives of Plutarch, Lucian, Polybuis, and other

things; his Dialogue on the Drama, and his Translation of du Fresnoy's art of Painting. These, for what they are, fell in no respect short of his other productions. They are strong, full, varied, clear, and decisive. He was every where a consummate critic, and capable of abiding by the best test, for he could excel those he criticised; but his general opinions are most to be relied on, not only because they are divested of personality, but that they are correct and infallible, upon all which occasions he is so easy, so unaffected, so natural; that, though he illustrates his subject by a thousand images, he never entangles, or confuses it.

This has, induced, the watchful critics to fancy that he was not very profoundly stored with erudition, but that from a quick preception, a large intercourse with the world, a discriminating judgment, and an indefatigable perseverance, he studied the world instead of books, and made observation supply the place of learning. If so, it were devoutly to be wished that they would graduate in the same school; but, though this, in great measure, is the truth, it is not wholly so. DRYDEN had learning enough for any purpose, yet he had good sense enough to despise pedantry, and genius enough to treasure intellectual intelligence in preference to

mere school doctrine ; yet, upon a careful perusal of his works altogether, it will be easily apparent to a discerning mind ; that, though there have been men of more genius, and men of more learning, the equanimity with which these qualities in him corrected each other, the store of ability he had to invent as well as to perfect, and the wonderful judgment with which he wrought barbarity into refinement, add a peculiar delight, and a valuable utility to literature, while they give his fame at once a lustre and a novelty.

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## CHAP. V.

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CONGREVE, VANBRUGH, FARQUHAR.

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HAVING completed all that materially relates to dramatic writers, whose labours commenced before the Revolution, and continued for some time after it, and brought forward the stage to 1708, I shall now enumerate such plays as were produced up to that period, and remark on the most essential circumstances relative to their authors.

CONGREVE, about the place of whose birth, by his own connivance as it should appear, there has been as much contention as about HOMER's, as if it were material to posterity whether a man of talents was born in the wilds of YORKSHIRE, or the bogs of KILKENNY, was, let him have drawn his first breath where he might, a most charming English

writer\*. He produced at the age of seventeen a Novel, called *Love and Duty Reconced*, to which he prefixed an address which has great good sense, and poignant observation. Doctor JOHNSON says that for such a time of life, it is uncommonly judicious; to which he curiously adds, "I would rather praise it than read it."

There is nothing particular in the life of CONGREGVE except that, though a mere writer, and at that time, he contrived to get into places to the tune of twelve hundred a year, to which he added other considerable emoluments; that with all his merit he affected not to court fame; that he was affronted because VOLTAIRE came many miles to pay his respects to him as a man of talents, and that he left ten thousand pounds to a duchess.

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\* SOUTHERN severely reproves CONGREGVE for affecting to be ashamed of his native place, which his biographers say was KILKENNY, though as he gave it out it was at BARDSA, near LEEDS in YORKSHIRE, but in this account he had been often found tripping. To this FARQUHAR is supposed to have alluded in the Stratagem, where Archer, being asked by Fougard, by way of posing him what school they went to in IRELAND, "Why," says Archer, knowing he was throwing out a good bait, it was TIPPERRARY, "Ah now dare you are out," says Fougard, "by my soul 'twas KILKENNY."



As to CONGREVE, as a writer, except having established a criterion in theory for lyric poetry, which by the way had been established in practice by DRYDEN, he has left nothing of any material consequence but plays to be remembered by; but those contain a species of wit so extraordinary, so ingenious, and so admirable, that they will ever be considered as a capital ornament to the English language. Their plots, however, are so intricate, the dialogue is so ill appropriated, and nature so little considered, that though all men of nice judgment and critical discernment must admire them, yet they never will be in general estimation. They are a string of bon mots, an acted jest book; but such bon mots, and such jests—so neatly turned, so exquisitely witty, so incomparably brilliant—that it is plain they were written with infinite pains; whereas, dialogue in comedy should seem what might be easily spoken. No one, however, wishes CONGREVE had written in any other manner; for though his comedies prove that true nature—perhaps a little elevated—and strict probability will ever go soonest to the heart, yet an acquaintance with his plays, and a judicious determination to overlook these very pardonable defects, beget in time a relish for them, which those of no other author can excite.

The *Old Bachelor*, CONGREVE's first play, was produced in 1693. at which time some say he was only nineteen, and others that he was twenty-one owing I suppose to the difficulty of ascertaining where he was christened. At either age it certainly may be considered as a wonderful performance. DRYDEN the moment he saw it pronounced it the best first attempt he had ever met with, and the world has long decided in favour of its merits. Dr. JOHNSON seems to wonder how such a perfect resemblance of the world and its manners could be drawn by such a boy, and then goes into an elaborate argument to prove that this is very easily possible, but it so happens that there is not so much truth in his argument as in his conjecture; for nothing can be a grosser mistake than that so much knowledge of human nature could have been gathered from books. The misfortune of this play is that it has too much wit, and this was so confirmed afterwards that, except *Love for Love*, none of this author's comedies received any thing like the applause due to their merit, as writings. They were too luscious, too surfeiting; the beauties of their wit were too glaring, too astonishing, too replete, and the conception of its hearers was to stretch into admiration, that the pleasure of tranquillity were lost in the effort, and thus at length the the dramatic reputation of CONGREVE died of a plethora.

The *Double Dealer*, which was performed the next year, had less success, though its conduct is much better than that of the *Old Bachelor*. The reason is evident. CONGREVE's first attempt surprised rather than pleased, and by this time the surprise was gone off, for though he had toiled himself into wit his audience did not chuse to toil themselves into pleasure, and, however admirably he had managed his bouts at altercation between his characters, they were tired of hearing almost inexplicable conduct explained through fallies of wit and repartee, however brilliant.

*Love for Love*, performed, as we have seen, at the opening of BETTERTON's theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, had a different fate, because the plot is less complex and more interesting than either of the preceding plays; and it so happens that, though it represents nature in finery and trappings, yet in other respects it is correctly nature, and, though it is not very likely that CONGREVE had either DRYDEN, Lord SHAFTSBURY, or King WILLIAM in idea in his character of Forelight, all of which has been insinuated it was a fair object for his pen as well as many others in the piece. The test of its merit is that of all his productions it was best received at first and has continued longest a favourite with the public.

Two years afterwards came out *The Mourning Bride*, a tragedy than which nothing can be conceived more strange and unnatural, except as to the ground work of the story, which is tender and affecting, and owing to this it has been very frequently repeated. It is stuffed in many places with such rant and bombast as LEE would have writ in *Bedlam*, and blushed for when he came to his senses. There are, however, some few flowers among all these weeds and brambles, and but few. The rest of this piece is like his poetry in general, which is as overcharged with imagery as his comedies are with point, and if we try to conceive it, it is with an aching imagination. that may raise astonishment, but must destroy pleasure.

*The Way of the World*, performed 1700, though perhaps the worthiest of all his plays, was indifferently received, and he is said to have quitted the stage upon this disgust. but, as if those who say so wished to shew their want of consistency, they tell themselves that he brought out the year afterwards *The Judgment of Paris*, and, in 1707, when he was in the Haymarket, the associate of VANBRUGH, his opera of *Semele*.

Every body knows, and every body admires

The *Way of the World*. Its playful fallies, its brilliant turns, its epigrammatic points, will be the theme of praise as long as wit shall be the subject of admiration; but people don't give orders to their servants, or talk about their common affairs in bon mots and epigrams, or if one or two such characters could be found, and it would be proper to exhibit him for the sake of originality, why are all the characters to be witty alike? Why is the author always to be on the stage and to utter all the fallies of his brilliant imagination by the mouths of others, who, to make a dramatic representation perfect, ought to be permitted to speak for themselves? besides the cunning of writing for the stage is that the dialogue, however witty, should appear as if it had never been written at all, whereas in CONGREVE it is plain to be seen that every thing has not only been written but written with effort\*. But let us not cavil at

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\* I cannot here resist an inclination to mention a thing that the celebrated BUTLER wrote, by way of ridiculing this style of witty dialogue, which was levelled at ETHERIDGE and others, and may here be applied to CONGREVE. It is a dialogue between CAT and PUSS on the roof of a house. Tom darts upon his prey and the Lady thus reproves him :

CAT. Forbear foul ravisher this rude address,  
Canst thou at once both injure and caress?

PUSS. Thou hast bewitched me with thy powerful charms,  
And I by drawing blood would cure my harms,

CONGREVE beacuse his plays do not generally

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- CAT. He that doth love would fet his heart a tilt.  
Ere one drop of his lady's should be spilt.
- PUSS. Your wounds are but without, and mine within;  
You wound my heart and I' but prick your skin;  
And, while your eyes pierce deeper than my claws,  
You blame th' effect of wh ch you are the cause.  
I luit to love, but do not love to hunt,
- CAT. That's worse than making cruelty a sport.
- PUSS. Pain is more dear than pleasure when 'tis past,
- CAT. But grows intolerable if it list.
- PUSS. At once I'm happy, and unhappy too,  
In being pleased, and in displeasing you,
- CAT. Preposterous way of pleasure and of love,  
That contrary to its own ends would move,  
'Tis rather hate that covets to destroy;  
Love's business is to love and to enjoy.
- PUSS. Enjoying and destroying are all one,  
As flames destroy that which they feed upon.
- CAT. Force is a rugged way of making love,
- PUSS. What you like best you always disapprove:
- CAT. He that will wrong his love will not be nice,  
To excuse the wrong he does, to wrong her twice.
- PUSS. Nothing is wrong but that which is ill meant;
- CAT. Wounds are ill cured with merely good intent.
- PUSS. When you mistake that for an injury  
I never meant, you do the wrong, not I.  
But, while you stifle and inflame desire,  
You burn and starve me in the self-same fire.
- CAT. It is not I, but you, that do the hurt,  
Who wound yourself and then accuse me first;  
As thieves, that rob themselves, 'twixt fun and fun,  
Make others pay for what themselves have done.

please; let it rather move our admiration even to wonder that so young a man should find such a mine in himself as to be able in five years to dig out such a cluster of brilliants, and such brilliants, that whatever labour it may have cost him to get at them, they will be ever a most splendid ornament to the literature of that country they adorn.

VANBRUGH, though his abilities were confessedly inferior to those of CONGREVE, took, however as surer way to succeed. He exhibited manners as as they are; and, lest the complicate plots which had been accustomed to surprize instead of please English spectators, should preclude his success as it had the success of CONGREVE, he simplified his by a close attention to the mode of fabricating French plays. MOLIERE and DANCOURT furnished him with an inexhaustible source of materials, and it must be confessed he made a notable use of them. It cannot be said, however, that he servilely copied them for his own mode of writing though it had little nerve, for dialogue in light comedy, was unaffected and easy, and he had a happy facility of making his characters speak correctly in nature though he kept them to a situation sufficiently elevated to answer all the purposes of an author of reputation, I remember it was remarked by the actors,

when I was a member of the theatre, that it was easier to study VANBRUGH than any man who had ever written.

VANBRUGH, like CONGREVE, got into favour and grew opulent, but this may be attributed more to his reputation as an architect than as an author, not that his buildings in stone and brick were made of such durable materials as those fabrics he raised upon paper, for, coming after INIGO JONES and CHRISTOPHER WREN, if any thing is to be said of his fame it would be reverse of what has been already quoted of AUGUSTUS. He was, however, highly thought of on this account by the great to the material benefit of his fortune and their immortal ridicule. His plays were produced in the following order:

The *Relapse*, performed in 1697. This play is completely a sequel to CIBBER's comedy of *Love's Last Shift, or the Fool in Fashion*, in which that great observer, if not upon public characters, upon public writers, formed a most admirable number of striking effects from the materials of former authors, and with a laudable art and judgment managed so that his play might suit his acting; but he has still a higher claim to commendation. He was beginning



with great discernment and good sense, to reform the stage without risking the danger of appearing an innovator, for nothing can be more moral than the catastrophe of *Love's Last Shift*. yet ETHIRIDGE, and other dissolute writers furnished the materials; but, though I shall hereafter have plenty of opportunity to examine this, I conceived it necessary to say so much at present as there would have been an awkwardness in examining a sequel without noticing something of the subject on which it was founded.

If CIBBER in his play endeavoured to fashion the stage into something like decency, VANBRUGH seemed determined to kick down the foundation of this trembling fabric; for nothing can be more licentious than the *Relapse*. CIBBER brings a man to reason, to happiness, and his family; but VANBRUGH thinks it a scandal to polite manners to leave him there, and therefore undoes all the praiseworthy work for which the other claims so laudably to be commended; as if it was a disgrace to a man of the world to be honourable. There is, however a wonderful succession of pleasantry and neatness in this play, but so much the worse, for witticism is an argument in favour of vice and immorality.

The *Provoked Wife*, performed in 1697, is an-

other play of the same licentious cast; but it abounds in such pleantry and is so full of natural and inextinguishable humour that to this moment, whenever there has been an actor capable of sustaining the character of Sir John Brute, the public have unaccountably consented to overlook the shameful and scandalous conduct of Lady Brute, who not only seems delighted that her husband should give her a wordly reason for making him a cuckold, which ought to have been beyond the reach of all provocation, but is a commodore and pliant instrument to the seduction of her niece. There are many other glaring objections to this play even now, but, as it stood originally, it was indeed most shocking'y revolting, particularly the scene where Sir John Brute disguised himself like a clergyman the better to beat the watch and bam the justice of peace, which scene VOLTAIRE with his usual want of candour gives as a pattern of English comedy. As, however, we have had no Sir John Brute since GARRICK convulsed the audience with his incomparable performance of that part, it has rested ever since in perfect tranquillity, and I think it is very probable that it is now in its last sleep\*.

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\* This play, and *Love for Love*, COLLIER most severely censured in his *Structures on the Stage*, not with equal propriety by the by, for though it has been said, and I am afraid too truly, that what-

*Æsop* performed in 1697. This comedy was made into two; why it is impossible to tell, for it was ill enough received when it first appeared. It is completely formed on BOURSULT's two plays, the two of which we have examined, and if we have seen that a perpetual repetition of the fables, however excellent, tired a French audience at the time declamation was the delight of that people, it is easy to conceive the reception it met with on

ever wit CONGREVE might have had in his writings he had little virtue, yet there is less of that open unpardonable profligacy than there is in VANBRUGH, and this is proved by COLLIER's being obliged to strain points whenever he came to reprobate CONGREVE, whereas his reprobation was too obvious and too merited when he sought for opportunities in VANBRUGH. Speaking of *Love for Love*, he instances two speeches as a ridicule of the scripture, which construction they certainly will not bear. Say Sir Sampson Legend, "Sampson is a good name, your Sampsons were strong dogs from the beginning." "Very true," answers Angelica, "but if you recollect, the strongest of that name pulled an old house over his head." "Here," says COLLIER, "you have the scripture buried and Sampson once more brought into the house of Dagon to make sport for the Philistines." Is this any thing like truth? Not at all. Angelica cannot help laughing at the idea that an old man should have the courage to undertake a young wife and by this obvious remark, to ban from ridiculing the scripture, she only laughs at Sir Sampson, who ever thus a man irreverent, who says "he is as poor, or as patient as Job." Mr COLLIER is more supportable when he reproaches VANBRUGH for imbecility in introducing a rake who assumes the character of a clergyman, and who gets drunk and bullies the watch.

the English stage, especially as it was according to custom crammed with licentiousness.

The *Pilgrim*, 1700, was an alteration of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's play, but though brought forward with DRYDEN's *Secular Masque*, and a Prologue and Epilogue also by him, which, however, neither mentions the play nor the occasion of its revival, it had but little success. The *Folse Friend* 1702. This comedy is said to have had success, but it does not seem to have kept the stage, and indeed it has very little to recommend it.

The *Confederacy*, 1705, is a comedy of another stamp; it is built on an excellent ground work, and though full of intrigue is less exceptionable on the score of indelicacy than any of this authors productions. I consider it very nearly as a perfect comedy, and for this I should give my reasons were it not that it would be only repeating the public decision, which has clearly proved that it never has ceased, and probably never will cease to be a popular favourite.

The *Mistake* is a play of great merit. It was originally performed in 1706, and has been frequently revived. The quarrels of the lovers and their servants are in that way inimitable. It were

ity instead of keeping up the consequence of meritorious writers by affixing their productions with suitable alterations according to times and circumstances, that plays of this value should be cut down to farces, which in the *Miser* and many other instances, have prevailed to the disgrace of the theatre. These plays, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Squire Triloch*, which are MONTAGU'S *Com. Indragire*, and *Amfiteo. Fe. Carpagne* make up the works of VANARUGH, except *The Comedy of Hylé*, which is almost verbatim from DANCOURT'S *Amfiteo. de Carpagne*, and *The Journey to London*, which was left unfinished and afterwards made into *The Provoked Husband* by CIBBER.

We now come to FARGUES, a man greatly esteemed as a gentleman and considered as a writer. He first went on the stage, but through the misfortune to wound a performer in a duel by using a sword instead of a foil, he relinquished that profession. WILLIS, however, who knew his talents, advised him to write for the stage, and in return FARGUES made his friend the hero of his pieces, which, however, he is said to have drawn as portraits of himself, having got a commission in the army, and being a young man greatly affected by the gay world; young, volatile, and wild, but polished, sensible, and honourable.

The excessive sensibility to which FARQUHAR was a sacrifice impeded him perhaps from considering his writings so maturely as he ought to have done\*; but there is yet enough in them to shew that

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\* POOR FARQUHAR, feeling the consequences of poverty and dependence, gave out that he wished to marry a woman of fortune. A lady who had fallen violently in love with him, but who had no fortune, pressed herself upon him for a woman so considerable property. He, having too much honor to let a lady upon so delicate an occasion, without examining her title and title deeds, married her and was heartily chagrined at his defective bargain, without the power however of upbraiding her as the author of it who loved him tenderly, and made him, at least in affection and solicitude, a most valuable wife. His next object was to take some other means of rendering himself and his family independent, for which purpose, by the advice of a nobleman in power, he sold his composition for a present supply under a promise that he should be speedily provided for, which was all he got from my Lord. His family excluded, and instead of being independent, he got every day more and more involved. This so completely conquered his mind that, unable to bear the poverty which he had always dreaded, and hurt to death to see an amiable wife, in whom he now delighted, and a growing family in want and distress, his wretchedness fixed upon him a lingering decline which finished him before he was thirty. During his illness he wrote the *Beaux Stratagem*, and with an equanimity of temper which had never for a moment deserted him, he predicted that he should die before the run of it was over, which actually happened. Among his papers was found the following letter to his friend WILKS.

“ Dear BOB,

“ I have not any thing to leave thee, to perpetuate my memory,  
“ but two helpless girls, look upon them sometimes and think  
“ of him who was to the last moment of his life, thine.

“ G. FARQUHAR ”

This trust WILKS faithfully fulfilled by procuring benefits for

he had great requisites as a dramatic writer, for his plots are ingenious and original, his characters are natural and unaffected, and his manners, though common and obvious, are never trite or vulgar. Thus his comedies always give rational pleasure, but seldom excite strong admiration; and there can be no doubt that if he had lived as independently as CONGREVE and VANBRUGH, and had not been cut off prematurely, he would have given more original proofs of his talents as a complete dramatic writer than either of those authors; since in what he has left the management is more judicious, the nature more faithful, and the faults more venial.

FARQUHAR's first play was *Love and a Bottle*. It came out in 1699. at which time he was twenty-one. The stage at that time knew nothing but licentiousness, and therefore he considered it as incumbent on him to draw such a character as Roebuck; which after all is much better as to nature, force, and spirit than almost any thing that had then appeared, or, perhaps, that has appeared since. The success of this play encouraged FARQUHAR to go on, and, in 1700, the Jubilee year, he produced *The Constant*

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his friend's family; but this did but little, for Mrs. FARQUHAR died not long after her husband in indigent circumstances, and his daughters, one of whom was alive in the year 1764, were obliged to submit to drudgery for a maintenance.

*Couple*, which play had a run of fifty-three nights the first season, and has had almost innumerable repetitions. This play is so well known that it is useless to say any thing here of its merits. The corroborated determination of the public is the test of truth which has ever been and must ever be in its favour.

Sir Harry Wildair is a sequel to the *Constant Couple*. and, like sequels in general, inferior to the original. Characters that are worked up should be let alone. In these pieces the parts were admirably performed. It is said that not even the smallest idea has been conveyed of Sir Harry Wildair since WILKS and NORRIS, ever after appearing in this play, was called *Jerlike Dicky*. The *Inconstant* is a play of intrinsic merit. It appeared in 1702. The plot is very similar to BLAUMONT and FLETCHER'S *Wild Goose Chase*. and the circumstance of the treachery against Mirabel in the house of the Courtezian is said really to have happened to FARQUHAR. The characters are admirably drawn, and of this piece it may be said in common with many others, that whenever the theatre has found actors for the play, the play has always received applause from the public. The *Stage Coach*, produced in 1705, is a



pleasant trifle, which was performed as a farce, and in which FARQUHAR was assisted by MOLDEAUX.

The *Recruiting Officer* also came out in 1705, and it was written, as we are told, on the spot where its author laid the scene of action, who was himself at that time on a recruiting party, and therefore had an opportunity of painting his portraits from nature. In which task he has succeeded completely as the world will bear me testimony. For Captain Plume he is said to have looked in the glass; and, in the rest, at the persons who surrounded him, Justice Ballance has been acknowledged for a character of worth and property who lived at that time SHROPSHIRE, and, in gratitude for the hospitality he received from that gentleman and his friends, he dedicates his play to all friends round the Wrekin. This play is so well known that it is intruding to enlarge upon it, I shall therefore say that there will be a dearth not only of actors but of public taste if it ever should be excluded from the theatre.

The *Twin Rivals*, which is said to be the best and most regular of all this author's works, was performed in 1706. This judgment appears to be fallacious, and though there are strong traits of merit, perhaps taken in one sense stronger than any thing in

FARQUHAR, yet you miss a great deal of the negligent ease in which the mind is so fond of sporting with this author. To detect villany and imposition does not seem to be so much in his way as to reward honesty and frankness. Teague is well drawn, so is Mrs. Midnight, but it is almost censure to be obliged to praise in pencils; and, even if ARISTOTLE himself could upon these occasions step forward and do us the kindness to regulate our theatres for us, he would preach to little purpose against such sterling arguments as an applauding public and a well filled treasury. At the same time let me remark that treasuries may be filled, and audiences may applaud without the smallest worthy inducement, but I am now speaking of plays, not puppet shews.

The *Stratagem* came out in 1707. When we consider that this comedy was began and completed in six weeks, during which time the author lay as it were on his death bed, it is impossible to deny, had health and a longer life been permitted him, that FARQUHAR must have reaped very brilliant reputation as a dramatic writer. This play is a most pleasing and interesting representation of human manners, and has that peculiar felicity in common with most of this author's works of contrasting the elegant and the simple with the common and the fa-

milar, without injury to either; but as there is scarcely a theatre in the kingdom where various Archers, Scrubs, Bonifaces, and Chemies, have not frequented their hour, it would be only intrusion to remark any thing further on this sprightly and entertaining comedy. I shall, therefore, close this article by saying that these poets were a triumvirate that greatly ornamented the short period in which they wrote, and that to examine them how you may, it will be difficult to know how to give a preference. CONGREVE went for W. VANBRUGH for humour, and FARQUHAR for nature, not that there was an exclusion of nature from either of the others, but CONGREVE's nature was fine, elegant, distant, and self important, you admired him but had no inclination to approach; VANBRUGH's nature, which was gay, thoughtless, extravagant and so forth, you laughed at but could not approve, but the nature of FARQUHAR which you saw every day in life, and which rationally made up the most laudable of your relaxations, you naturally felt and cherished.

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## CHAP VII.

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ROWE, STEELE, AND MRS. CENTLIVRE.

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OF those dramatic writers, at this period, whose labours were celebrated in their own time, and have reached with reputation to ours, ROWE STEELE, MRS CENTLIVRE, and CIBBER, deserve particular mention. CIBBER, however, involving in his theatrical history a number of interests, and being remarkable as well for his management as his writing and acting, shall occupy the next chapter by himself; and, in the intermediate time, we will examine the others.

ROWE, whose dramatic reputation stands meritoriously high with but few of the great and splendid requisites, was one of those writers who went more for delight and instruction than elevation and astonishment; a species of merit that confers a great public obligation, since goodness, with all its beauty, is more captivating and dignified in the garb of unaffected truth than tricked out in all the flippery of

subtily and sophistry. In other words, the stage was designed for all auditors, and all auditors feel and understand ROWE, perhaps not so immediately as OTWAY, but the effect is none lasting, because the sentiment is not so alluring as impressive.

ROWE was, properly speaking, a tragic writer, his attempts at comedy having been very weak and disreputable. Like most masters of their art, he took liberties with his subject, fancying, probably, that an English author had as good a right to suppose himself qualified for constructing a play as a Greek critic. This has now and then offended a few fastidious cavillers who have fallen foul of him for his frequent breaches of the unities; and it must be confessed that it had been better in ROWE, or even in SHAKESPEAR, if the scene of action had never been interrupted during the continuation of any one act, as this violation, as doctor JOHNSON very sensibly observes, is to add more acts to the play, every act being a portion of business transacted without interruption; and this, by the way, defines every play constructed by the rules of ARISTOTLE, to be a piece of one act, but let us examine his plays and we shall find that, however he might have been deficient in point of regularity as a dramatic writer, he well knew the more worthy

part of that occupation of conveying pleasure and improvement.

The *Ambitious Stepmother* was brought forward in 1700. The story is evidently taken from the establishment of *Solomon on the Throne*, by BATHESHEBA, ZADACK the priest, and NATHAN the prophet, the particulars of which may be seen in the first Book of Kings. There is an originality and a strength in the language of this play in places that ROWE never afterwards exceeded. The dialogue between Memnon and Magas is deservedly celebrated. It served for the ground work of *Tamerlane* and *Bajazet*, but boasts considerable superiority, as it is more natural and unaffected, and therefore more solid and convincing. GARRICK revived this play in 1758, but it had not the success he expected.

*Tamerlane*, originally performed in 1702, is a tragedy more universally known and celebrated by its having been written to serve a temporary and popular purpose than by any superiority it has a right to claim over the other plays of ROWE. All that's moral and amiable is thrown into the character of Tamerlane, who is the representative of King WILLIAM, all that is tyrannic and detestible is given

to Bajazet, who sits for LEON is the fourteenth, but the flattery is so gross, and the slander so malignant, that compliment is lost in adulation, and severity is blunted by the want of candour, like the white and the black spirit in an Oriental Tale, one so permits all the mischief, and the other is so unable to prevent the good, the hero is alternately happy and miserable through the story, and thus, by being no more obliged to his guardian angel than his tormentor, the purposes of morality are defeated.

The public have certainly upon popular grounds greatly admired this play; and, in favour of many admirable, moral and patriotic sentiments it contains, have passed over the whining egotism of Tamerlane, and the empty fury of Bajazet, but the critics with more sense and less spleen than their custom have marked it as a catching rather than a meritorious effort of genius, calculated to surprize the imagination, but incapable of penetrating the mind, and gratifying the understanding.

Taken as a historical fact, ROWE has been egregiously wrong, for Tamerlane, so far from possessing refined manners and transcendant virtues, is represented as a barbarous and merciless conqueror, and the only contention between him and Bajazet, upon

his principle, ought to have been who might ravage most countries and practise the horrors of war with all its desolation to the most sanguinary degree of perfection. It would in this point of view, have been more just to have imagined heroes and given them the qualities of WILLIAM. and LOUIS; but perhaps ROWE fancied the mode he took better policy, and that, when his play should have lost that part of its attraction which related to its resemblance between the English and French monarchs, it might yet be received as a picture, whether true or false, of the wars of Tamerlane and Bajazet.

The *Fair Penitent*, brought out in 1703, is a tragedy of much more consequence to the reputation of an author than *Tamerlane*. It exhibits a domestic calamity, and one of that particular kind which is not the less affecting for being but too frequent. It is so correctly in nature that if it has a fault it is that vice is represented in too alluring a garb in Lothario, and that Calista feels more anger than shame, more indignation from detection than compunction from guilt. This certainly injures the interest and weakens the moral.

There are more radical faults in it. The play  
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is finished at the end of the fourth act, and the distress felt by the innocent is stronger than would naturally grow out of the compassion due to the guilty; but it is nevertheless a play of uncommon beauty and merit, and as these discriminations are too nice for general criticism the satisfaction the public receive from it is honourable to the author and creditable to themselves. It is less necessary to expatiate on the great variety of admirable dramatic requisites the *Fair Penitent* contains, as they are felt by every heart, and confirmed by every judgement.

The *Biter*, brought out in 1705, was ROWE'S only attempt at comedy, for when he found in spite of his own opinion of his piece, which went for, as we are told, as to make him expose himself by sitting in the house and laughing while the rest of the audience were hissing and rooting, he had the good sense, however he might find it laudable to ridicule biters, not to be bit afterwards himself by any perversion of his talents\*.

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\* This ridicule of biters, or queerers, or hoaxers, or whatever title under which they may be distinguished, was certainly very fair and has been, from ADDISON'S paper in the *Spectator*, to the present time, pretty successfully attempted. The circumstance of ROWE'S laughing in the midst of a groaning audience is something like a matter that happened on the French stage. The author of a

*Ulysses* was performed in 1706, and is a tragedy, though it possesses much merit in the writing not well calculated for general effect. There is so much of the air of fable in those accounts handed down to us of ancient heroes, that subjects of this nature are better calculated for opera than for tragedy, or comedy. If we were to take from those innumerable poetic beauties contained in the *Odyssey*, only those which are probable, the pieces would be too flimsy for effect, and, if we were to violate probability, as a regular dramatic production it would be inadmissible. *Ulysses*, therefore, has ever been considered as a heterogeneous production, containing poetical merit, but not enough with all the attempts that have been made to revive it, to keep a fair stand on the stage.

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piece, that was highly disapproved, had bestowed orders very liberally among his friends to support his tickery production. Seeing however that it was impossible to allow any share of commendation to the piece, they, by degrees, all deserted him except one, who, faithful to his promise, and yet open to conviction, was reduced at last to applaud himself at the same time. "What is all this," said a spectator, who sat near him, "is it possible you can approve and disapprove at the same time?" "No, no," said the other, "that's not the case. I know this play is the most execrable thing that ever appeared before the public, but I came in with an order and have a great regard for the author, and so, that I may neither wrong him nor my own judgment, I have abused the piece out of respect to myself till I am hoarse, and clapt it to oblige him till my friends are fore."

The *Royal Convert*, a tragedy performed in 1708. This play has a considerable portion of feeling merit, and is never performed but it excites that kind of solid praise which is highly honourable to the reputation of an author. There is, however, too much of the heaviness of RACINE in it; too much turgidness; too much labour; and, as there is scarcely a passion it displays or incident it produces that had not been before successfully treated and thrown into affecting situations, however it may soberly interest the mind, it is not well calculated to rouse the feelings.

Rowe certainly had great expectations from this play, and attempted to catch at popularity by imitating, in his prediction of the blessings of the union, SHAKESPEAR'S celebrated prophecy in *Henry the Eighth*, of the happy reign of ELIZABETH; but he injured the jet of this catastrophe by giving it a religious turn, and his prophecies were too well anticipated to leave him more than the gleanings of that reputation of which SHAKESPEAR reaped so fair a harvest

*Jane Shore*, a tragedy well known and greatly admired, and very deservedly, by every English auditor, was produced in 1713; and, though the

present account of dramatic productions is intended to extend as nearly as possible to 1708, as, except one play, it completes the career of ROWE, I shall notice it in this place.

With some inadmissible variations from the original story, this play resembles a well known historical fact, and one of that kind which must interest every heart. A penitent, even though an adultress, under very peculiar circumstances may be forgiven, and never was forgiveness excited so laudably as here. but to exhibit a necessary and salutary warning, and to shew that a woman who has violated the marriage bed may not, according to the present fashionable definition of dramatic moral, triumph, and be happy, the poet has made heaven divide the judgment by giving the clemency to the husband and taking the justice to itself, and thus JANE SHORE receives pardon and dies.

This play, with all its merit, and all the hold it has taken of the public, has been the subject of perpetual criticism, and some of the strictures of the different wits seem to have breathed more a spirit of envy than candour. POPE has been remarkably unfortunate. *Jane Shore*, we are told, was written in imitation of SHAKESPEARE, though I dont find the

author has admitted this, and POPE, in the Art of sinking in Poetry, though he afterwards wrote ROWE's epitaph, has this remark, "I have seen a play, professedly written in the style of SHAKESPEAR, wherein the resemblance lay in one single line,

"And so good *monnowiye* good master lieutenant."

Now it so happens that there is nothing like this in *Fane Shore*, the line alluded to being in *Lady Jane Grey*, but unfortunately for the quoter it is not correctly the same, being,

"And so good *morning* good master lieutenant \*."

\* That every saddle may be placed on the right horse, as this remark comes from the Art of Sinking in Poetry, it is two to one against its being POPE's, for, though it has always been given to him, SWIFT and ARBUTHNOT were partners with POPE in that production; but, now we talk of horses, the fact itself has a resemblance to a small mistake of the notorious Mr. ASHLEY. When they were getting up a new pantomime some time ago at Covent Garden theatre, it was in contemplation, among other objects intended to relieve camels, elephants, and rhinoceroses, and calculated, as Mr. BAYRS has it, to elevate and surprise, to introduce some horses that had been taught, like platoon firing, to kneel, stoop, and stand. For this purpose an enbailly was set on foot and the purport formally notified to the only manager in the world of that docile animal the horse. When this great man had correctly understood the nature of the demand, after a variety of incongruous and unintelligible exclamations, occasioned by his indignation lest his horses should be disgraced by appearing on the stage, he vociferated, "Here's your works! Want

Other critics have complained that probability is grossly violated in the breach of the unity of time, and it must be confessed that the starving of JANE SHORE between the third and the fifth acts of the play is a strange irreconcilable circumstance; but we must take the brilliant with this flaw or we cannot have it at all, and it were pity to loose that lustre it really has by perpetually contemplating on a trifling defect. It has also been objected that there are many florid speeches utterly inconsistent with the state and situation of the distressed personages who speak them, and this is said to have been the continual practice of ROWE; but, to shew that they are not all agreed on the subject, one doctor says that "Alicia is a character of empty noise, with no resemblance to real sorrow or natural to madness," another insists, that "the interview between Jane Shore and Alicia, in the fifth act, is very affecting, and that the madness is well painted." It happens, however, fortunately for the reputation of ROWE, that this play of all others best derives its pretensions to favour from the criterion of public judgement, and it will constantly be found, when-

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"my horses to manoeoeer upon Common Garden stage Why,  
 "damme, 'tis *scandalous magnesia*. Sir, will Mr. HARRIS, lend  
 "me Mrs. SIDDONS to sing in my Amphitheatre."

ever it is ably performed, to attract crouded houses.

Having betrayed myself into an insinuation of my plan, so far as to notice Jane Shore. I shall now wind up my account of Rowe by mentioning his only remaining dramatic production, *Lady Jane Grey*, which was performed in 1715, and was then received, and has often been repeated, with considerable success.

Mr. EDMUND SMITH, a writer of reputation, and BANKS furnished ROWE with some hints for the construction of this play, but the English history and his own judgement with more, and it must be confessed there are many passages of extraordinary value to be found in it, particularly the scene of Guildford and Jane Grey in the third act, the reconciliation between Guildford and Pembroke, and the scene of Jane Grey before she mounts the scaffold.

Indeed were this play to be judged according to the merit of its writing, its construction, and its conduct, it is of equal excellence with any other of the tragedies of this author, but historical subjects have never been treated so successfully as by

SHAKESPEAR, nor was it ROWE's forte so much to elevate as to interest, to pourtray public calamity as to paint private distress. Upon this ground has ROWE established a reputation, highly honourable to himself, and greatly valuable to the interest of the theatre; and, in spite of the high authorities by which we are taught to believe, he has no merit but the elegance of his diction and the suavity of his verse, that his characters are easily drawn, and easily acted, that he seldom moves either pity or terror, and that, though he delights the ear, he rarely pierces the breast, I appeal to the tears which are constantly shed at his tragedies, and to that consequent criterion their continually holding a forward situation at the theatre, to contradict these assertions, and to shew that, as impressive as well as great actions are a forward, perhaps the best, drift of the stage, such writers as ROWE and OTWAY, who, though they do not step beyond the modesty of nature in their writings, render that modesty in its most lovely garb, have a claim to a most elevated rank as supporters and embellishers of the drama.

Though, according to my plan, I cannot take up STEELE now as fully as I have taken up ROWE, yet it is proper to speak of that extraordinary man



in this place, whose strange private conduct, and meritorious public sentiments, were so continually at variance.

There is a noble manliness in independency of mind, and in every character who possesses it there must naturally be much virtue; but STEELE, who certainly had this quality, gave it a new turn; for his precepts and his practice were perpetually at variance; and, while his private conduct was tinctured with vice and profligacy, by way of a set off, he transferred all the virtue to his pen. This drew him very often into unpleasant scrapes, for it was natural to believe those sentiments insincere, to which his actions constantly gave the lie.

When he wrote the *Christian Hero*, at which time he had gone into the army and cut himself off from the succession of an estate merely to indulge in those profligate propensities which in that profession he might do without restraint, he was of course ridiculed most triumphantly; but this, so far from altering him, only stimulated his mind to new exertions of the same extraordinary kind. He swore in company, and moralized upon paper, sinned in the evening, and absolved himself in the morning, and seemed as if he was determined intimately to know every

species of vice in order practically to shew his fellow creatures how hideous it was, and how carefully it ought to be avoided, and it must be averred of him that whatever were his follies, he never prostituted his pen for the purposes of venality, or adulation.

As the history of STEELE is involved in that of the theatre itself, I shall leave what I have to say of it till I relate how he came to be a patentee, and go into other circumstances connected with that transaction. In the mean time, as his first three plays are within my present province, I shall look at their respective merits.

\* The *Funeral, or Grief A la Mode*, was originally performed in 1602, and is a comedy of very considerable merit. Indeed it has so many sterling and original points that it has served to supply materials for many imitators since, whose flimsy pretensions to public favour, without this auxiliary help, would have been considered as very slight indeed. Nothing can establish a better proof of the admirable merit of this play, both as a work of real invention and of true genius, than the diligence with which the critics have attempted, to no purpose, to discover that it is not genuine; for the plot and the

style are unquestionably the author's own, and the last is so peculiar, which is, indeed the characteristic of STEELE's writings, that nothing can be more difficult to get by heart; but, when attached to the memory, nothing can be more easy to retain.

The outline of this play is incomparably fine, and the characters are full of variety; every thing is perfectly in nature, and the moral is complete. The best virtues are meritoriously rewarded, and the worst vices justly punished. The objects held up for imitation, and detestation, are generosity, and hypocrisy, and these are recommended and decried as they branch into the circumstances that call them into action, from Campley to Trim, from Lady Brumpton to the Undertaker. In short there is more merit in this play than the world has been generally inclined to allow; and, though it is never performed without great applause, it has been more admired through those mediums, one of them in particular, where, by the introduction of other incongruous circumstances, more catching and less valuable, auditors have been cheated into admiration without the fatigue of thinking.

The *Tender Husband*, brought out in 1705, is not so good a play as the *Funeral*, but it has many

beauties and much truth. ADDISON, who upon all occasions manifested a warm anxiety to appear a kind of literary patron to STEELE, seems to have fondly wished the world to have set down a principal part of the merit of this comedy to his assistance; but to a reader of discernment, nothing can be more easy than to detect this palpable falsity. The style of the two writers is completely different, and I think there would be little difficulty in pointing out all the squared, cut, measured, and divided papers in the Spectator, written by ADDISON, even without the assistance of CLIO, whereas STEELE's style is strong, and diversified, it goes directly for nervous effect, without the smallest appearance of fishing for praise. If ADDISON assisted him at all it was probably with his advice, and that must have injured the play; for it is the only dramatic production of STEELE that has a cast of that dull insipid regularity for which ADDISON has been so much admired by the French,

The *Lying Lover*, performed in 1704, is certainly STEELE's weakest play, probably owing to the careless negligence with which it is written; for, though it must be confessed CORNEILLE's *Menteur* in some degree furnished the outline of it, yet it cannot be considered materially as a plagiarist, because the character of the Lyar is fair general game,

and perhaps this author would have treated it better had he not lazily adopted from another instead of searching for something better in his own mind, for the *Menteur* is not CORNEILLE's best play, nor, if it were, did he write comedy so well as STEELE.

The *Lying Lover* was unsuccessful, and its author, in consequence, instead of considering this hint as a wholesome admonition, wrote no more for the stage till 1709. We will, therefore, leave him to his other pursuits, one of which gave the public sufficient reason to rejoice at his indifferent success on the stage; I mean the *Tatler*; a work replete with a thousand dramatic requisites, and which, through a perfectly original medium, taught the world to judge with precision, taste, and elegance, on interesting yet familiar manners.

It should seem, after what I have said of female writers, that I shall find some difficulty in speaking of Mrs. CENTLIVRE; for, if I allow her the merit the world has awarded her, I falsify my general opinion, and, if I do not, I desert that criterion, public discrimination, which I have every where consented to abide by.

I do not, however, find myself in any such predicament, All I have ever said has amounted to no

more than that when women lose that female delicacy which is their worthiest designation, and become SAPHOS in writing, they may be as well SAPHOS in every other respect; and, out of compliment to the less outrageous and more lovely part of their sex, I should have no objection to distinguish them at once by a neuter gender\*. But I see nothing of this in Mrs. CENTLIVRE; for, though she uses Latin, French, and Spanish, in her plays, particulars which have astonished some of her biographers, and convinced them that she must have been a prodigy of learning, yet, as her plots were generally borrowed from the Spanish authors, through French translators, instead of inventing, she had nothing to do but to quote.

I will not, however, deny that many of her plays possess considerable merit, and I am willing also to confess that there is a titercenis in the remarks of women, when they write tolerably, for nothing more as to writing can we allow Mrs. CENTLIVRE, that often hits familiar manners with great neatness; and thus plays and letters have occasionally boasted an

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\* I have often thought, on considering the well known though not very decent remark on CÆSAR, alluding to the profligacy of his passions, which will occur to all classical men, that he would have made a good husband for SAPHO.

apt originality from the pens of females which have lent embellishment to literature, the best specimens of which will be found upon the whole in the plays of this lady, and the letters of Lady WORTLEY MONTAGUE. Nay, I will go further, for indeed I am fonder of praising than of blaming, and say I have remarked a thousand times among intelligent audiences, that the quickest and most infallible discrimination has made its first appearance among the ladies, and that their approbation has generally pointed out the very passages for which an author would naturally and worthily feel a predilection.

By this criterion then let Mrs. CENTLIVRE be judged. Since she has risked puerility rather than go beyond nature; since, in matters of plot and character, she has generally had recourse to authors of sterling ability, and been careful not to injure or lower the value of their merit, for whenever she did this she miserably deceived herself; since she never attempted to surprize the world with any new species of logic to make it appear that four and four make nine, but was upon all occasions content with taking nature as she found her, let us honestly allow the good lady, since she would write as much praise, at least, for an attempt to exhibit men and manners without exaggeration, as candour is willing to award those females in stilts, who, through the me-

dium of epithet, metaphor, and figure, lavishly deal out ideas and fondly fancy they are describing the world.

In order to see how far her works will bear out these observations, without examining into the truth of whether Mrs. CENTLIVRE ran away from her mother at a tender age and cohabited at college with the celebrated ANTHONY HAMMOND, passing for a boy, or whether she had any step mother at all; whether her third husband fell in love with her as she was performing Alexander the Great, or whether she ever performed on the stage at all, or in short whether any of the circumstances relative to her are truth, in which her biographers, in their love of truth and candour, have comfortably set down a string of assertions as consistent as those above, I shall now look into the merits of those dramatic pieces, eight in number; which she produced before 1708.

None of these plays are of that description which gives the best security to Mrs. CENTLIVRE's reputation. The *Perjured Husband*, performed in 1700, is a tragedy, and therefore totally out of this lady's style of writing. The theatrical propensity is generally towards tragedy at starting, whether in writing



or in acting. Most of the Scrubs have been originally Richards, and the terror of the bowl and dagger has usually more attraction for inexperienced writers than the pleasure of the sock and the mask. Her second attempt, probably owing to the advice of some friend, was a comedy. It was called *Love's Contrivance*, and is little more than MOLIERE'S *Médecin Malgré Lui*, which had but little effect till the subject was, as it ought to be, compressed into a farce by FIELDING.

The *Beau's Duel*, 1704, is a flimsy piece which was very little noticed at first, and is now entirely forgotten. The *Stolen Heir* has the misfortune to have been plunged into still darker obscurity. The *Gamester*, which came out in 1705, rescued, however, the fame of its author from that gloom which the foregoing puerile attempts had cast over it. It is a translation of the *Dissipateur* of DESTOUCHES, in which the original author, who wrote with strength, is not injured, nor is the foundation, which is pretty firm, shaken. This comedy, therefore, assisted by a prologue from ROWE had tolerable success.

The *Basset Table*, performed in 1706, is more busy than the *Gamester*, but less interesting. It had

weak pretensions to success, and therefore could not make its way with any great advantage, especially as the English audience became at this particular time good discriminating judges. *Love at a Venture*, 1706, was not performed in the regular course of theatrical business, being brought out at BATH. If it had a claim to praise that claim was never ratified by the test of an appearance on a London theatre. The *Platonic Lady*, brought out in 1707, is another instance of that insipidity that pervaded Mrs. CENTLIVRE's plays till she produced *The Busy Body*; a comedy which the actors predicted would be damned though it turned out to be one of the pleasantest pieces on the stage. Till the examination of that and the remainder of this lady's productions, I must now leave this subject to look after CIBBER and bring up my account of inferior authors to 1708; after which I shall go regularly on with the state of the stage to GARRICK.

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## CHAP. VIII.

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CIBBER.

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As I do not profess to be the regular biographer of those characters which fall under my examination in the prosecution of this work, I cannot of course say much of the chequered life of CIBBER; a life that FIELDING has whimsically said he seems to have lived on purpose to have an opportunity of apologizing for; but, as he has himself given an ample account of it in that apology, full certainly of most fulsome egotism, but nevertheless richly stored with interesting theatrical information, and I may with strict propriety notice all that relates to the most active part of his life, I shall find plenty of opportunity of blending with the public character the private man.

For this, however, I am not quite ripe. It would create little less than repetition to notice it here, as it so completely blends itself with the state of the stage onwards to GARRICK, which I shall shortly

have occasion to bring up. Some few general observations may notwithstanding be necessary, and to these at present I shall confine myself.

CIBBER was perhaps, upon the whole, a character of as singular utility to the theatre as any that ever lived, for without any extraordinary inherent genius, by judgment, by art, by ingenuity, and by perseverance, he became eminent as an actor, as an author, and as a manager, and I think it is not difficult to pronounce that, in the last capacity, GARRICK modelled his conduct upon CIBBER's plan.

Conscious of the impossibility of attaining reputation as an author by bold and genuine traits of intuitive genius, he contented himself with keeping within the modesty of nature, and what he lost on the side of fire and spirit, he by this means gained on the side of truth and morality. Thus when the *Anathema* of COLLIER was fulminated against those oaks DRYDEN, CONGREVE, and the rest, CIBBER kept himself as inoffensive and secure as that laurel with which he was afterwards so harmlessly adorned.

When RICH and his partners were pulling and tugging at the theatrical bone till they had made it all over mud without satisfying their hunger, CIB-

BER watched their motions; and, finding at length where it had been hid, with true sagacity appropriated it to himself. He saw the certain consequences of those contentions which had convulsed the theatrical state, he had himself been an advocate for morality, he therefore applied every sensible and effectual remedy to cure those evils, and at a time too when they had grown to the most alarming height. He saw that conciliation, and not perverseness, honesty, and not chicanery, were the only means to save the stage; and these, whether from principle or interest it does not alter the argument, he fairly and judiciously applied; and, that his associates might cordially co operate with his measures, he, like RANDOLPH'S Colax, so accommodated himself to their separate tempers that he not only, whenever any dispute arose, reconciled them to one another, but himself to both.

As an actor he had a more difficult task to perform; but to him obstacles were incentives. Nature, even according to his own account, with all his egotism, had denied him almost every theatrical requisite; yet he found a substitute for all, and made study, perfectness, and judgement, arrest as much the attention of the public as others did truth, elegance, and nature.

It must be confessed there are always characters enough in which this style of acting may be exercised with effect; and, to help this, he introduced his Lord Foppington, a part which was certainly a happy hit at extravagant and ridiculous folly. In short, uniting these three capacities in himself, he so made his abilities in one department subservient to the rest, that, keeping the real interest of the theatre in view upon the broad principle of its serving the purpose of morality, it cannot be denied that he must be considered as mentoriously eminent in all his departments.

This will as I go on be gradually made out, in the mean time let us examine his plays up to 1708.

*Love's Last Shift*, which was performed in 1696, and which I have already been compelled to speak of in my account of *The Relapse*, does its author infinite credit. CIBBER had that sort of predilection for the stage which no arguments, no discouragement, no disappointment, however mortifying, could restrain. In spite of his surprizing the actors and the town into a conviction that, however he might be unqualified by nature for an actor, he found so perfect a resource in his good sense and his discrimination as to surmount all difficulties and please by

an appeal, if not to the senses, at least to the understandings of his audience ; I say, in spite of this, his companions would not by any means allow his claim to any rank in his profession, and they even connived at his ruin, when an unexpected occasion put the part of Fondlewife into his hands in CONGREVE's play of the *Old Bachelor*. Their words were, " If the fool has a mind to blow himself up " at once, let us even give him a clear stage for it. '

Knowing completely thus circumstanced what to do, and finding that while POWELL was imitating BETTERTON, he should gain upon the public by imitating DOGGFT, he continued to get so strong a hold of their favour that it was decided from that moment that though he was a peculiar actor he had certainly considerable merit. The difficulties however thrown in his way by his brethren were not easy to surmount, especially as they so far had reason on their side as to object to acting which derived all its effect from labour and art.

In consequence of these obstacles which represented that there was no character already written in his way he was compelled to write a character for himself, and to all these circumstances GIBBER certainly had great obligations. Indeed when an en-

vied public man is stimulated to stretch his genius and put out its strength at all points to manifest its excellence and power he is generally the better for it as long as he lives, for he surprizes himself into a conviction of latent merit which he little suspected he ever possessed, and which perhaps would never have shewn itself had it not been by such adventitious circumstances called so forcibly into action.

Wound up to the necessity of providing for his reputation as an actor, and bound more seriously to beware that in the added capacity of author he did not experience a irreparable fall, more than common exertion became indispensibly requisite; he, therefore, worked himself up to the proper pitch and stamp a reputation in both lights, which was never afterwards denied him. The great trait of *Love's Last Shift* is the moral foundation on which, with consummate good sense, especially considering the time when it was written, CIBBER constructed this play, and which, in spite of the unnatural, and indeed impossible circumstance of a man's making love to his wife and not knowing her, obtained for it a permanent reputation. It might however easily have been perfect. *Mrs. Loveless* might have passed



for a foreign Courtizan, which would have been a complete disguise and have thrown a out better lure. It must however be allowed, and time has proved the truth of the assertion, that *Love's Last Shift* is a play of that judicious kind by which the interest of the stage is best promoted.

As a proof that CIBBER was obliged to muster the whole strength of his best exertions in the production of his first play, he appears to have so exhausted himself that it was a long time before he replenished his mind with a good stock of materials; for *Woman's Wit*, brought out in 1697, except that part of it which he wrought into a farce called *The School Boy*, and which after all was not original, is a very poor business indeed. *Xerxes*, a tragedy, produced in 1699, is still less worthy of mention. It was damned the first night, which SILLIE notices in his Theatrical Inventory in the *Tatler*, one article of which is "The imperial robes of Xerxes never worn but once."

*Love makes a Man*, however, made CIBBER's reputation; for it established him in all opinions as a judicious and sensible dramatic writer. It was performed in 1700, and is evidently taken in many places from the *Custom of the Country*, and the

*Elder Brother*, of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, or rather from the source whence those authors drew their materials for their plays. It is, however, infinitely beyond every thing that has been done upon the subject; and, if it only boasted the humorous contrast between Clodio and Don Quolrick, it is impossible for its effect, to be carried to a greater degree of perfection. It is perfectly alive and diverting, and will ever be a favourite, for whatever much it affords us we shall never repent of upon reflection.

CIBBER's next attempt was an alteration of SHAKESPEARE'S *Richard the Third*, in which he manifested much judgement, and indeed much modesty; for, plainly feeling himself unequal to follow the style of his great original, he restored passages from SHAKESPEARE'S other plays to fill up the chasms he found it necessary to make in properly adapting it to the stage. There were no doubt, with all its admirable merit, many tedious and trifling parts in the original play, which cooled the interest of the different scenes; by this judicious alteration the events follow with more rapidity, and are indeed more affecting, and it cannot be denied that the sterling merits of SHAKESPEARE in this wonderful play are rendered more brilliant by the polish they have re-

ceived from CIBBER, whose sole care has been, by rubbing off the dust of time, to display its lustre to greater advantage.

*She Would and She Would Not.* performed in 1703, and derived from a Spanish source, is a play full of pleasantry, whim, and interest. Don Manuel and Tripanti are drawn in a bold and masterly manner, and those ladies who have determined in their first appearance to sport as much as possible their personal charms, have generally chosen Hypolita by way of debut. This comedy has been, probably, ever since it was written on the stock list, and will ever continue so subject, however, more or less to repetition in proportion as actors are found to support the characters.

The *Careless Husband*, which came out the following year, is a very extraordinary play. The plot is slender the interest is familiar, and the characters are of that description which in general create the least anxiety in an audience. It has no positively comic incidents nor personages to chequer and break the chain of circumstances, which the author has chosen from common events in high life. It professes to delineate no more than elegant manners, a picture in general of all others the most pal-

ling and vapid, and yet has he thrown a peculiar grace and elevation into his play; that, though it consists of but seven characters, two or three of which are perpetually before you, it continually excites and gratifies every laudable curiosity.

It was the fashion for CONGREVE and others to say of CIBBER that his plays had in them only a great many things that were like wit, but that in reality were not wit, but this was only glossing over that disappointment they felt themselves, CONGREVE in particular, at finding the productions of this author preferred to theirs. CIBBER, by a close attention to the best merits of them all, and a careful determination to shun their errors, steered a sort of middle course that brought him to his mark more expeditiously and more securely than they, with all their genius, arrived at theirs. To this he added a peculiar excellence of his own, and this was a happy knack of penning the common conversation, a little elevated perhaps, of elegant and courtly characters; by which means he united all the essence of ETHERIDGE, SLDLEY, and that set, adopting the wit, and shunning the profligacy, and with wonderful felicity blended levity and honour, and regulated the freedom of CHARLES, by the morality of WILLIAM.

Thus was the merit of *The Careless Husband* tasted in a double sense. It was a school for elegant manners, and an example for honourable actions. The frailty of human nature was well exposed, and well atoned for; and personages in high and exalted stations were made to feel themselves dignified by the exercise of that honour which results from conviction and reflection, at the same time that their manners were courtly, and their conversation edifying.

Indeed this peculiar excellence in CIBBER, which had something so like wit that it answered his purpose full as well as if it had really been so, conjured up another kind of slander which has been almost constantly, by the envious and malignant, charged upon that merit they want the ability to imitate. It was most curiously found out that CIBBER was not the author of his own works, and thus the productions that POPE afterwards consigned to eternal oblivion for their dullness, acknowledging them to be CIBBER's, were, in the zenith of their reputation, denied to be his on account of their extraordinary merit.

*Perolla and Izadora*, a tragedy, was produced by CIBBER in 1706, and like the rest of his plays of

this description was very soon laid by. It should seem that he wrote this piece in compliment to lord ORRERY, whose assistance he acknowledges in his preface to have received, and to which he modestly attributes even its very small success, for it was performed but six times.

The *School Boy* is a very pleasant farce, and was altered by CIBBER from his comedy of *Woman's Wit*. The *Comical Lovers*, 1707. is a hasty alteration of DRYDEN's *Marden Queen*, and *Marriage a la Mode*. It however was well received and has been sometimes repeated, but never with any marked success.

The *Double Gallant* is a much better play. It came out the same year. It was severely treated when it made its original appearance ; but, upon being revived about two years afterwards, it became a great favourite, and has so continued to this day. There are certainly many admirable scenes and situations in it ; and, though a resemblance of Atall may be found in twenty different Spanish plays, CIBBER has managed both that and many other things with adroitness and judgement.

The *Lady's Last Stake*, brought out in 1708, is again a play of great merit, but CIBBER had by this

time refined rather too much upon fashionable manners, and it began to be evident that the stage wanted something more to support it than high life, which by the way is not always natural life, and that mere elegance for want of contrast became vapid. This seems to have been CIBBER's opinion, for he immediately after this brought out pieces more diversified; but these, not being within my present pursuit, I shall leave them till I have brought up other authors to 1708, after which we shall go through the whole conduct of CIBBER in quality of manager, a situation which he filled with great credit to himself, and advantage to the cause of the theatre.

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## CHAP. IX.

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SOUTHERN, MRS. PIX, MRS. MANLEY, MRS. COCK-  
BURN, LORD LANDSDOWNE, DENNIS, OLDMIXON,  
MOTTEAUX, AND GILDON.

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RATHER than make three eras in my account of SOUTHERN, for he produced plays before the Revolution, in the interval between that event and 1708, and afterwards as far on as 1726, I have neglected him so far in order to bring as much of him as possible into one point of view.

SOUTHERN was a poet of extraordinary value, but his writings have two characters, which he seems to have been conscious of to his shame; for, knowing how much more the world is caught with frivolity than reason, he divided his reputation in two, and wrote ribaldry and licentiousness for the public, and beauty and nature for himself. This he pathetically lamented to lord CORK, but he seems to have



forgot to mention that what he did was to comply with every whim, however absurd and derogatory, for interest; for it is notorious that SOUTHERN contrived to get considerably a better recompence for his labours than any author of his time; and, as a proof of this, though he produced few pieces during a very long life, he died the richest of the dramatic poets\*.

His conduct will be in some degree developed in an account of his plays, and therefore we will proceed with those. The *Loyal Brother* was produced in 1682, at a time when the toy interest was uppermost, and SOUTHERN did not therefore fail to compliment, for reward, King JAMES, then Duke of YORK. He was, however, very little rewarded by public applause, for the *Loyal Brother* had but indifferent success on the stage.

The *Disappointment* was SOUTHERN's first comedy. It was performed in 1684 and had tem-

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\* The fact is that there was nothing to which SOUTHERN did not condescend to get money for his plays. By one of them he is said to have cleared, besides the wages of his flattery, which were considerable, seven hundred pounds, to acquire which sum DRYDEN at the same time was obliged to write seven plays. This is averred as a fact, and that DRYDEN, who was sometimes mean himself, by the bye, reprobated him for his meanness.

poitary success, but it is full of licentiousness, and therefore died with the age that produced it. *Sir Anthony Love*, 1691, is a comedy still licentious, but of a better cast. It had very great success, and is one of those for which he got so well paid. *The Wives' Excuse*, 1692, is probably SOUTHERN'S best comedy. It is much more endurable, as to its dialogue, than his other comedies, and the conduct has more of the right sort of interest; but it is far from being a good play. *The Maid's Last Prayer*, 1693, has so much merit as that it served for the subject of of a song written by CONGREVE.

SOUTHERN'S next play, *The Fatal Marriage*, however redeemed his reputation with the judicious, who certainly before had only a suspicion of his being a good writer. Here their suspicions were well confirmed, and they had only to lament that he should couple so much beautiful writing with so much contemptible trash. It was brought out in 1694, and continued in the heterogeneous state of a tragi-comedy till GARRICK very judiciously separated the farcical part from the pathetic, the latter of which is most impressively natural, and brought it out supported by himself and MIS. CIBBER. Since which it has been a known and acknowledged favourite of the theatre, and it certainly contains

many happy passages which, for exquisite power over the heart, are perhaps not to be equalled unless in *Oronooko*.

*Oronooko*, a play, as far as it relates to the tragic part, full of beauty, truth, and nature, was produced in 1690. The critics, and indeed the world have loudly complained, and with reason of the ribaldry and frivolous stuff put into the mouths of the planters; but it is extremely difficult to know what to do with these biforms, for the circulation belongs every where; and, though it is easy to cut off the deformity, there is always a danger of wounding some vital part. This has been clearly proved by the various attempts at an alteration of this play, one of which, that made by HAWKESWORTH, is very respectable. If, nevertheless, some writer of considerable ability were to perfect, or rather enlarge the story by such dramatic requisites as are congenial to it, the pains would be well repaid by the reputation that would result from it; for it has nature so correctly true, tenderness so exquisitely touching, and sentiment so nobly dignified, that, if SOUTHERN had left behind him nothing more than the scenes between *Oronooko* and *Imoinda*, they would have composed a gem, small indeed, but inestimable.

The *Fate of Capua*, a tragedy, 1700, is an attempt by SOUTHERN in another way, for it is full of politics. In short it is written with an eye to business, and the author has not been sparing of that flattery for which no doubt he was handsomely paid. The domestic scenes, however, are full of beauty and interest, but by no means so valuable as those in *Oronooko*, or even in *Isabella*. SOUTHERN brought out nothing after this play till 1719.

Mrs. PIX, Mrs. MANLEY, and Mrs. TROTTER, alias COCKBURN, made up a triumvirate of Lady wits who enjoyed a great deal of the admiration of the namby pamby critics, and the indifference, and sometimes the ridicule of those whom heaven had vouchsafed to endow with taste and judgement.

Mrs. PIX wrote nine dramatic pieces. The first a farce, 1696, was called *The Spanish Wives*. It is entirely borrowed, and, after a few nights, was returned to the owner. *Ibrahim the Twelfth*, same year, is a tragedy, and the warmest advocate that I can find for it only allows that it is not contemptible. *The Innocent Mistake*, a comedy, 1697, borrowed from Sir GEORGE ETHERIDGE's *Man of Mode*, is much inferior to the original, and therefore very soon got out of fashion. *The Deceiver Deceived*, a comedy, 1698, was helped forward by DUFREY

and MOTTEAUX, but ineffectually, for it had no success. *Queen Catherine*, a tragedy, same year, reigned a very short time; for, in spite of the assistance of all the triumvirate, and particularly a prologue from Mrs. TROTTER, she abdicated her throne in about four nights.

The *False Friend*, a tragedy, 1699, has not found a single advocate among all the panegyrists of Mrs. PIX, therefore we may naturally suppose it played her false as well as others. The *Czar of Muscovy*, 1701. Here Mrs. PIX was determined to do the thing at once and introduce PETER the Great up in the English stage. The emperor, however, though at that time he was playing a conspicuous part on the theatre of the world, was scurvily handled, and forced, in spite of all his former victories, to a precipitate retreat. The *Double Deceits*, a tragedy, was as scurvily treated as the *Czar Peter*, and in the same year. Mrs. PIX went as far as *Persepolis* for her plot; but, whether she lost it in her way back again, or in whatever manner she managed to convey it to her audience, for I believe she had but one, it was the universal opinion that she had been wool-gathering.

With The *Conquest of Spain* we shall take leave of Mrs. PIX, of which play we have as few parti-

culars as of the rest. Indeed it should seem as if all her productions had been foisted on the public through the medium of connexions; and, just as we have frequently seen in the productions of lady writings, they became a sort of fashion of the ephemeron kind, but were too flight to be permanent.

Of Mrs. MANLEY a great deal has been said, and the observation which has continually occurred to me in the accounts of biographers in general, who, out of tenderness to their heroes and heroines, attribute to them all kinds of vices which they pretend to qualify <sup>their</sup> misfortunes, obtains here very particularly. Mrs. MANLEY, ~~was~~ tucked into a false marriage; ~~was~~ falsely accused by the Duchess of CLEVELAND of intriguing with her son, and by injuries and unworthy ill treatment was driven to conduct which all the world must confess was shamefully reprehensible. All this is ridiculous.

Mrs. MANLEY was a woman of turbulent and ungovernable spirit, who, fancying she could write, was determined to rule. She wrote a thing in four volumes, where she is severely satirical, without meaning or motive, as well on her own sex as all the rest of the world; while she herself deserves universal detestation for her own wanton and lascivious

descriptions in the very work in which she affects to admonish others. This work would never have rendered her popular but for the folly of the ministers of that time, who were stupid enough to fancy this mad production a satire on the friends of the Revolution.

A warrant was issued against her with all imaginable solemnity, she was denied the use of pen, ink, and paper, and treated as a person dangerous to the state; whereas her offence was only against common sense, in which, indeed, her accusers seemed determined to be even with her. After Lord SUNDERLAND, however, had made himself ridiculous enough by personating the principal character in this silly farce he was contented to take all the reproach to himself, and give all the popularity to her by discharging her, as he had retained her, without being able to give a reason for it.

The ministry soon after this changed, and another set came in, who treated her more kindly but more ridiculously than the former, for she was immediately invited by them to become their partizan; nay, she is said to have continued the *Examiner* after SWIFT left it off. But these traits are sufficient to shew the folly of those who encourage females to

depart from the only specie they can adorn, by flattering them that they possess talents which, were it true, cannot render them amiable if diverted from their appropriate use.

Her plays were produced in the following order. The *Royal Mischief*, a tragedy, performed in 1696, in spite of her admirers, who find that the allegories are just the metaphors beautiful, and that the rules are correctly observed according to ARISTOTLE, is a very extravagant stupid thing, which owed the little applause it received to her popularity, obtained as we have seen above, and which soon sunk into nothing. The *Lost Lover* is a comedy. It was brought out in the same year and had bad success, though Mrs. MANLEY's panegyrists tell us the dialogue was genteel, and the incidents interesting.

*Almyna* was the next production of this lady and a tragedy. It was produced in 1707, and is an endeavour to shew not what heroic virtue naturally is but what it ought to attempt. In short it is as extravagant as the source that produced it; being an ingenious mixture of *Caliph Valid Almanzor*, the *Arabian Nights*, and DENNIS's *Essay on Operas*. As there remains but one more production of this female



theatrical Quixote, and I am unwilling to resume the subject, I shall now speak of it even though it was not produced till the year 1717. It was called *Lucius, the first Christian King of Britain*, and dedicated to STEELE, whom she had formerly abused, and who so good naturedly passed by her folly as to write a prologue for her, and prevail upon PRIOR to write an epilogue, with all which assistance, however, it had very little success.

Mrs. TROTTER, or rather Mrs. COCKBURN, whom her biographers praise for her knowledge in the Latin grammar and logic, for embracing the Romish communion upon conviction, for her vying in metaphysics with LOCKE, for her love of her husband because he wrote an account of the Mosiac deluge, for her small stature and lively eye, produced five plays.

*Agnes de Castro*, a tragedy, made its appearance in 1696. It had been before treated by Mrs. BEHN, with whom this lady had better have let it rest, for it procured her neither profit nor praise, except that part of it, says an author, an Irishman probably, which contained a copy of verses to Mr. CONGREVE on his *Mourning Bride*. Her tragedy called *Fatal Friendship*, which came out in 1698, had better suc-

cess, and was reprinted in her works which were published in 1751 by Dr. BIRCH. The warmest advocate, however, of this lady only says it was the most perfect of her dramatic pieces.

The *Unhappy Penitent*, a tragedy, 1701, has not left a single trace of its fate, so that we know not whether it was good, bad, or indifferent. *Love at a Loss*, same year, I am almost as much at a loss to give an account of. The writers lay its bad success to its having being printed very incorrectly, an error certainly, but not of such magnitude as materially to affect the reputation of any production. but at any rate we cannot admit it here right or wrong, for the piece was called in and correctly printed, after which it was performed with as little success as before. One more play brings us to the end of this lady's labours. It was called *The Revolution of Sweden*, and performed in 1706; but, anxious as they have been to relate the particulars of Mrs. TROTTER's life as her biographers have trod very tenderly, on the ground of her theatrical reputation, we shall imitate them and pass by this tragedy without speaking of its success. As to its intrinsic merit, those who can procure her works and chuse to take the trouble of reading it, will not find enough entertainment to requite them for their curiosity.

LORD LANDSDOWNE was rather an elegant than a great writer; he felt in himself what was due to distinguished talents, and had the spirit and justice to encourage them in others. This heaped on him of course the unqualified praise of the poets, which both DRYDEN and POPE dealt out pretty profusely; so much so, that, were we to take the merit of his poetry from their report of it, we should conceive him to have been a writer of unequalled abilities, whereas his delight was to imitate the manner of other authors even to the copying of their imperfections, and thus his works became a farago of the style of other writings, without having any decided character of their own.

The particular merits of his poems, which are generally occasional, and imitations of WALLER, of whom he was an enthusiastic admirer, I cannot have room to give an account of. Some of them are in the mouths of those whose ears are more tickled with rhyme than poetry. His plays, though far from perfect, are his best productions.

The *She Gallants*, a comedy, 1696, has been highly spoken of and certainly had success, till some party people taking it into their heads that it was intended as a reflection on the government, which was

impossible, for it had been written twelve years before it appeared, when the author was a boy, and when the features of governing bore a different resemblance, it was severely handled. In sober judgment this play cannot be greatly praised; for, though it has wit and satire, or rather severity and finesse; yet, as the author piqued himself upon having kept the scene constant to one place, and the action entire, rather a cold recommendation of a lively comedy, and as one mark of it, not a very advantageous one, is an imitation of WYCHERLEY's obscenity it is not unlikely that the partizans, who put a violent end to its existence, only prevented it from dying a natural death.

*Heroic Love*, a tragedy on the loves of Agamemnon and Chriseis, had very great success, and, indeed, how could it be otherwise when the prologue was written by BOLINGBROKE, the epilogue by HIGGONS, when it was praised in verse by DRYDEN, and in prose by POPE. The kindness of all which was very handsome towards LANDSDOWNE, but very unjust towards the public, and disreputable towards themselves as men of talents; for there is some miserable things in this play.

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\* WALPOLE says that "it was fortunate for his lordship that,

The *Jew of Venice* was performed in 1701; and, when it is said that this comedy was an alteration of SHAKESPEAR'S play, brought forward through the medium of music and magnificence, its fate, notwithstanding all the auxiliary aid that was called in may be easily guessed at. This noble author was both assisted and praised as usual, but to little purpose, for the interest of the original is materially injured, and ROWE very justly remarks that the Jew is rendered comic, and we are prompted to laughter rather than detestation. In this play a masque was introduced called *Peluso and Thetis*.

The *British Enchanters*. This piece was originally performed as a tragedy in 1706. The intention of the author of this piece was laudable enough. It

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“ in an age when persecution raged so fiercely against luke-warm authors, that he had an intimacy with the Inquisitor General. how else could such lines as these have escaped the bathos.”

When thy gods  
Enlighten thee, to speak their dark decrees.

To which may be added that this noble author has made the supient ULYSSES turn puppet show man, by ending the piece with this distich.

Fate holds the strings, and men like children move  
But as they're led, success is from above.

was to correct the monstrous extravagance introduced at that time into operas by something more naturally gratifying to the senses. This is allowed by the critics, to be the most complete of LANDSDOWNE'S works, and, since the warmest of his admirers must allow that there are in it many wretched defects, that those passages that have merit seldom reach beyond mediocrity, and that there is not a single line of great genius in the whole, justice obliges us to pronounce that, however meritoriously he might have persevered in promoting the writings of others, he had no extraordinary cause to be vain of his own.

DENNIS, who was distinguished more as a critic than as a dramatic writer, has, however, left us nine pieces of different descriptions. This author lived in a state of warfare with all mankind, and in particular with the poets. ADDISON, STEELE, and even POPE, would have been friends to him but he completely put it out of their power by treating them with the rankest ingratitude, and he passed on to old age through a life of turbulence, petulance, and indigence; despised by every body from principle, and assisted by every body from pity<sup>\*</sup>.

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\* DENNIS boasted that though POPE had abused him in the

*Plot and no Plot*, a comedy, 1697, has only the merit of being regular as to the unities. It was a party business and had but little success. *Rinaldo and Arminda*, a tragedy, 1699, is of course from Tasso's *Gerusalemme*, and therefore but ill calculated to succeed as a regular piece. It was assisted by the music of both ECCLES and PURCELL, but is after all a strange thing. It put him out of humour, and he did not spare, as was his custom to deal out abuse upon the heads of more fortunate authors, on

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Dunciad, he would compel him to atone for it. Being asked how, he said he pretty well knew the vanity of the little gentleman, and would, therefore, solicit him to write a prologue to a play that, being in extreme poverty, he intended to get acted for his benefit, and that he was sure, notwithstanding their mutual enmity, the reputation of appearing charitable would readily induce him to undertake it. He was not deceived. POPE consented, and the play, thus strengthened, produced a good house, while the virtue of forgiveness of enemies was loudly chanted to POPE's honour. Both the world, however, and DENNIS were deceived, for the prologue was couched in such terms that every line contained some fine ironical stroke of satire against the poor devil he professed to serve; and, as this was within a short time of DENNIS's death when the shafts of his malevolence could no longer wound, and the fittest time in the world for manifesting that animosity had subsided to make room for benevolence, POPE certainly overacted his part, for surely insulting the distress he appeared solicitous to relieve, must have been a considerable drawback on his philanthropy, and the best of his friends could not vindicate him from having merited the title by which he was for some time distinguished of the Charitable Cynic.

whom he hoped to revenge himself by the success of his next play, which however was damned. It was called *Iphigenia*, and appeared in 1700.

The *Comic Gallant*, which is a most farcical alteration of SHAKESPEARE'S *Merry Wives of Windsor*, was performed in 1702. It is too ridiculous to go into the merit of a thing that was professedly written to amend a piece already perfect. *Liberty Asserted*. The success of this piece, which was brought out in 1704, almost turned poor DENNIS'S brain. He began to conceive himself an object of the utmost importance; and, because in the plot, which represents the wars carried on among the Indian nations, there was a resemblance to the situation of ENGLAND and FRANCE, and he had thrown in a number of hackneyed compliments on the government of this country at the expence of our neighbours, he considered himself, and procured himself to be considered, which kind of matters are very easily managed, as of the utmost consequence to the nation.

Puffed up by this adventitious favour, which proceeded in him from sentiments neither dutiful nor sincere, but were merely a catch for popularity, his vanity carried him to the most ridiculous height.



He went so far as to fancy his play had done so much injury to the French nation that the king of FRANCE would never consent to a peace without insisting upon his being given up as a preliminary article. Nay, full of this he even applied to the duke of MARLBOROUGH for his interest to avert this dreadful consequence of his patriotism, who very coolly told him to be perfectly easy, for that he had endeavoured to do the French as much mischief as possible and he had not found it necessary to conclude himself in the treaty.

Many other circumstances are related of this vain and credulous man; who, because he had done his duty by accident, or rather through interest, fondly fancied rewards and favours out of all measure were due to him, when thousands, from principle, were sincerely labouring for the interest and aggrandizement of their country without the view or the expectation of any further reward than the pleasure resulting from a consciousness of having honourably discharged an incumbent duty.

The next piece of this author was called *Gibraltar*. It was a comedy, performed in 1705, and deservedly damned. *Orpheus and Euridice*, a masque, with little merit and no success, followed in 1709.

In 1709, was performed *Appius and Virginia*, a tragedy, which was damned\*; and, that I may finish this author, he produced in 1720, *Coriolanus*, a bad, and of course an unsuccessful alteration from SHAKESPEAR.

OLDMIXON, who throughout his life, which was restless and unquiet, indulged himself in malevolence and cynical asperity, who wrote himself into the *Dunciad*, which he little regarded, having at the same time written himself into a place, whose actions in short are so little worth recording that they would have peaceably rested with his bones had not EUSDEN, ADDISON, and POPE absurdly acknowledged themselves hurt at his criticisms, produced three dramatic pieces.

*Amyntas* was a translation and had no success. It

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DENNIS was severely mortified at the fall of his play, having been convinced that by introducing a new kind of thunder it could not have failed of success. The thunder certainly was very good, and therefore the managers, having been at the expence of it, were determined to keep it for general use. Some nights after the damnation of his play, DENNIS was at the representation of *Macbeth*, and presently recognized his own thunder. When, unable to refrain himself, he jumped up. "There, gentlemen," said he to the audience, "there's a set of rascals for you! they get my play damned" "and then they steal my thunder."

was produced in 1698. The *Grove*, which the author himself does not know what to make of, for he tells the critics that it was first a pastoral, but that the dignity of the characters raised it into the form of a tragedy, was performed in 1703. Its success we know nothing about; but, whether it was little or much its merits cannot be estimated by it, for he was a violent party man, and therefore, wrong or right, most votes of course carried it. The *Governor of Cyprus*, a tragedy, was performed the same year, but of its success nobody has informed us.

MOTTEAUX, though a Frenchman, wrote a number of things, and among others fifteen dramatic pieces. He was a considerable trader in the city, and improved his affairs by being a complete linguist, which qualification fitted him for carrying on foreign correspondence. His plays, except one of them, are of the light kind, and, in some of them, there is vivacity at least, but no approach to excellence in any.

*Love's a Jest*, performed in 1696, had some success, but soon fell off, and has never since been revived. The *Loves of Mars and Venus*, 1697, taken from SHADWELL, MOLIERE, and an old Italian opera, was assisted by the music of FINGER and ECCLES. It was a mere trifle, and at last introduced

to make up a part of RAVENSCROFT'S *Anatomist*. *Novelty* is a bad imitation of DAVENANT'S *Playhouse to Let*. *Europe's Revels* was written on the peace of Ryſwick. *Beauty in Diſtreſs* is a tragedy, and has ſomething, in parts of it, like writing, but upon the whole wants ſtrength and intereſt. The *Iſland Princeſs* is only BEAUMONT and FLETCHER'S play under the ſame title made into an opera, which had but little ſucceſs. *Four Seasons*, a muſical title, the muſic by JEREMIAH CLARK, had its hour and died away. *Acis and Galathea* was of the ſame deſcription, the muſic was compoſed by ECCLES. *Britain's Happineſs* is alſo a muſical interlude. *Arſinoe, Queen of Cypruſs*, was an opera after the Italian manner; we know nothing of its reception. The *Amorous Miſer* is a comedy, The *Temple of Love* is a paſtoral opera, *Thomyris, Queen of Scythia*, is an opera, *Love's Triumph* is a paſtoral opera, and *Love Dragooned* is a farce, the laſt of theſe was brought out in 1708.

GILDON, who fell into the common error of fancying that, becauſe he was a man of learning, of neceſſity he could not fail to write, followed up a number of ſubjects with erudition enough, but without the ſmalleſt ray of genius. His plays are five in number and called The *Roman Bride's Re-*

*venge, Phaeton, Measure for Measure, Love's Victim, and The Patriot.*

The first of these is a very hasty production, which, never less, would been worse, probably, by too much revision; for GILDON always polished away the shape of his subject. It is a Roman story, and snippets of SENECA and JONSON, without the merits of either, a kind of shadow of a figure in lead; it seems to reflect the weight without being relieved by the prominences.

*Phaeton* is an imitation of *Euripides*, and modelled according to the rules of the ancients, which is enough to prove that it could not succeed. It sold, however, says an author, speaking of the merits of the play. for there were some strictures annexed to it on COLLIER's book. *Measure for Measure* was a bad alteration of SHAKESPEAR's play. *Love's Victim* was damned, and *The Patriot*, which was taken from LEE's *Lucius Junius Brutus*, in spite of the support it received from DENNIS and FARQUHAR, the first of whom wrote the prologue, and the other the epilogue, shared the same fate. The first of these plays came out in 1697, and the last in 1703.

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## CHAP. X.

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INFERIOR AUTHORS TO 1708.

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I SHALL now go into an account, a very summary one it must be, of the inferior, or rather subordinate authors, for some of them, out of their dramatic employment, have a fair claim to commendation, and these, to render my statement accurate, I shall bring forward in chronological order to 1700.

Of BETTERTON I have hitherto only spoken as an actor. He wrote, however, or rather dabbled for the stage, about in the same degree as BARON wrote in FRANCE. His first play was a tragedy, called *The Roman Virgin*. It was performed in 1679, and turned out to be only an alteration of WEBSTER's *Appius and Virginia*. The *Revenge, or a Match in Newgate*, which DODSLEY has printed in his old Plays, without giving us his opinion, by

the way, as to who is the author, is nothing more than MARSTON'S *Courtezan*, better adapted, perhaps, to the stage.

The *Prophets* is BEAUMONT and FLETCHER'S play altered into an opera. There is some sweet music in it, composed by PURCEL; but, though it has been frequently revived it never pleased. BETTERTON'S arrival from FRANCE with his scenery gave him the first idea of bringing forward this piece. *Henry the Fourth* is SHAKESPEAR'S play indifferently altered. The *Amorous Widow, or the Wanton Wife*, is MOLIERE'S *George Dandin*. There is some humour in it, however, and it is sometimes played as a farce even now. The *Sequel of Henry the fourth* is the second part of SHAKESPEAR'S play as indifferently altered as the first. BETTERTON performed Falstaff and thought he could add to the effect of the character. He, however, found himself mistaken. The *Bondman*, and The *Woman made a Justice*, were in the style of the rest. The last of these pieces was performed in 1719, therefore the performance of BETTERTON'S dramatic works took up a period of forty years, on which account I have spoken of them all together in this place. Some of them are posthumous, for BETTERTON died in the year 1710.

MOUNTFORT was also an author, and upon the whole of a better cast than BETTERTON; *The Injured Lovers*, 1688, was a tragedy. LANGBAINE charges this author with having, like sir COURTLY NICE, written for his own amusement, but without regarding wit. It had little success. *Edward the Third*, a tragedy, 1691, is said to be given to MOUNTFORT by BANCROFT. It is, however, taken from the well known story of the *Countess of Salisbury*. *Greenwich Park*, a comedy, same year, succeeded pretty well. *The Successful Strangers* is borrowed from SCARRON's *Rival Brothers*, but it had merit and deserved the success it met with. It came out in 1696. *Zelmane* was left unfinished by MOUNTFORT, and completed by some friend after his death. It succeeded more probably out of compassion to the memory of the author than from any intrinsic value the play possessed\*.

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\* MOUNTFORT's untimely end engrossed public attention to such a degree at the time it happened, that it may not be amiss to notice it here. Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE had, as we have already seen, a number of lovers, all of whom were unsuccessful, for her virtue was proof against every art. A man of the name of HILL, who, among the rest had been repulsed, was determined to carry her off, and for this purpose hired some ruffians; who, with the assistance of lord MOHUN, a kind of mohawk about LONDON, very nearly suc-



DOGGET produced a piece called *The Country Wake*, which is yet very well known, under the title of *Hob in the Well*. DRYDEN's son wrote a comedy, called *The Husband his own Cuckold*. It had but little success, though CONGREVE wrote the prologue, and the great DRYDEN the preface and the epilogue. TOM BROWNE, who was a facetious, low, impertinent wit, though a good scholar, and by no means a bad writer, whose vices and follies, had no relish for him unless they were excited by something novel and excentric; whose attachments were indiscriminate, and without sincerity, and who would rather lose his friend than his joke, wrote three

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ceeded in his attempt. The lady, however, was rescued and restored to her friends. Thus disappointed, he was determined to be revenged of MOUNTFORT, who played the love parts with Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE, and was considered as a favoured rival. They lost not a moment therefore, but, while they were warm in resentment, went instantly and watched MOUNTFORT's house, determined to execute their vengeance on him at his return. They were but too successful. As he came up to the door, that scandal to his rank, lord MOHUN saluted him in the most friendly manner, which was the signal agreed upon for HILL to begin the assault, who instantly knocked him down; and, before he had time to draw his sword, cowardly ran him through the body. HILL escaped, and lord MOHUN was tried; but MOUNTFORT, with his dying breath, having declared him to be innocent, he was acquitted. He, however, afterwards fell in a duel by the same treachery, as he himself confessed, that he had practised on MOUNTFORT.

pieces for the stage; all as strange and indefinable as himself. These were called *Physic has a Bleeding*, *The Stage Beaux tossed in a Blanket*, and *The Dispensary*. The titles of these pieces pretty well shew what they are. The second was a ridicule on COLLIER; and, by way of currying favour, it was dedicated to RICH. The *Dispensary* was a mere farce.

BURNABY, a fashionable wit, wrote four fashionable plays, for they were slimzey and soon forgotten. The *Reformed Wife*, 1700, was as we are told, the ground work of CIBBER's *Double Gallant*, but this is not true; for the source is Spanish, and CIBBER went to the fountain head when the water was clear, BURNABY took his opportunity when the water was muddy. The *Lady's Visiting Day*, 1701, was visited but once. The *Modern Husband*, 1702, was damned owing, as the author has told us, to its being written in a month. The excuse is insult added to imbecility. *Love Betrayed*, 1703, is stolen from SHAKESPEAR's *Twelfth Night*, and in so bare faced a manner that fifty lines were literally transcribed from it.

BAKER, who certainly had much more merit than BURNABY, has nevertheless been much abused

and particularly by WHINCOP; who, at the same time he allows his plays to possess strong marks of the *vis comica*, says that they are destitute of wit and humour; a style of criticism too often practised. His plays came out in the following order:

*Humours of the Age*, 1701, was a juvenile performance and written hastily. It certainly has very little to recommend it. *Tunbridge Walks* is a much better attempt. It came out in 1703, and contains both character and satire, and rather of the meritorious kind\*. *Act at Oxford*, 1704, a comedy, was considered as a rude and unbecoming satire against the University, and, therefore, prohibited. *Hampstead Heath*, however, which appeared in 1706, was little more than the former play with alterations. It was as ill received as the other. *Fine Ladies*

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\* We are told a curious circumstance relative to this play. Maiden, which character is certainly the origin of all the Fribbles since that time, was written to expose a folly of which this author had been guilty of, and which his own understanding and observation had taught him to correct. There certainly cannot be any thing so contemptible in any one who wears the form of man as effeminacy; and, if it be true that BAKER ridiculed this puerile and pitiful vice in himself to warn others against it, lest they should incur universal contempt, we must confess he had a most uncommon degree of Spartan forbearance. It would be no harm if it were oftner imitated.

*Airs*, 1709, had some success. Of these plays *Tunbridge Walks* upon the whole is greatly superior to the rest, and is, indeed, the only piece of this author that has kept the stage,

It is almost lost time to enumerate many more of these authors but custom, and indeed critical necessity demand it. I shall, therefore, say that DILKE, protected by lord STRAFFORD, wrote *Lover's Luck*, *City Ladies*, and *The Pretenders*. The first stolen from MARMION, CROWNE, and ERMERIDGE, the second original, and therefore good for nothing, and the third so indifferent that it soon lost all pretention to notice.

NORTON wrote a play called *Pausanias*, which GARTH has thus celebrated :

And Britain, since *Pausanias* was writ,  
Knows Spartan virtue, and Athenian wit.

GOULD, who was first a footman, and afterwards a schoolmaster, wrote the *Rival Sisters*, a play stolen from SHIRLEY, and *God's Revenge against Murder*. SCOTT, lord ROXBURGH's secretary, wrote *The Mock Marriage*, and *Unhappy Kindness*. The first a puerile attempt, and the other a theft from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, "considerably improved,"

says the author before me, I suppose he means in point of indecency, "by the character of the wife, "who provokes the husband to ease her of her "maidenhead."

FILMER, who was a strong advocate for the stage against COLLIER, wrote a tragedy called *The Unnatural Brother*, which was even duller than COLLIER's book. DRAKE, who was a physician, and a political writer, and therefore perpetually incurring the resentment of death and the pillory, wrote *The Sham Lawyer*, borrowed from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER. PHILIPS, who, according to some, wrote one play, to others, two plays, to others three, and to others four, was bred in IRELAND and criticised by Irishmen, whence has arisen, perhaps, so many bulls. The name of PHILIPS is prefixed to four plays called *The Revengeful Queen*, *Hibernia Freed*, *St. Stephen's Green*, and *Belisarius*, but whether these pieces were the production of four PHILIPSES, or only the PHILIPS spoken of at present, is perfectly immaterial.

*The Revengeful Queen*, taken from sir WILLIAM DAVENANT, was not worth stealing. *Hibernia Freed* is a very confined business. *St. Stephen's Green* was not thronged with much company, and

*Betfarius* begged in vain for applause. WILLIAM WALKER, who went on the stage, and afterwards died attorney general at Barbadoes, wrote *Victorius Love*, a tragedy, and *Marry or do Worfe*, a comedy. The first performed in 1698, and the other in 1704. THOMAS WALKER wrote a comedy called *The Wit of a Woman*. SMITH, a barrister, wrote *The Princfs of Parma*. MANNING, who was a man of some consideration and employed in different embassies to SWITZERLAND, was the author of *The Generous Choice*, and *All for the Better*, both comedies. CRAUFORD, historiographer to queen ANNE, besides other things, wrote two comedies called *Marriage Alamode*, and *Love at first Sight*. The first of these was written in ten mornings, and performed three evenings, and the other was damned.

The famous BOYER, known by his celebrated *Grammer and Dictionary*, fled to ENGLAND at the Revolution, being a French Protestant, and was author of many ingenious works, the worst of which was a play called *Achilles in Aulis*. COREY, first a barrister and afterwards an actor, was author of a comedy called *A Cure for Jealousy*, and a farce called *The Metamorphosis*. The first was totally neglected, deservedly indeed, owing, however, in some degree to the great run of the *Constant Couple*, which

CORRY, in his impotent revenge, calls a Jubilee farce. The farce was a bungling attempt to make a farce of *Albumazar*. HARRISON, a paten maker, wrote *The Pilgrims*. It is spoken well of says my author, but it was never acted, rather, I think, a negative compliment.

HIGGINS, a staunch adherent to JAMES the second, wrote a play called *The Generous Conqueror*, the writing of which smacks more of the gentleman than the poet. Mrs. WISEMAN, a maid servant, having a great deal of leisure time, says her biographer, read novels, wrote a tragedy\*, which enabled her to set up a tavern. It was called *Antiochus the Great*. WILKINSON wrote a play called *Vice Reclaimed*. Lord ORRERY, whose public cha-

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\* Stupid as this observation is, many people take it for granted that there is nothing further required to accomplish works of ingenuity than to have plenty of leisure time, forgetting that in such case all the loungers in the kingdom would be men of genius, than which, heaven knows, nothing can be further from the truth. I declare what follows to be a fact. A gentleman said one day to a voluminous writer, who has been most laughably but most malignantly slandered by a variety of reports that he fathers the works of others instead of producing his own, "I am astonished when, if people reflect for a single moment, they cannot credit what they assert, that so foolish, and so wicked a report should prevail as that you don't write your own works." "Why should not he write them," said another gentleman, "he has nothing else to do."

racter is so well known that I the less regret the impossibility of going into it here, wrote a comedy called *As you find It*, which is by no means equal to the expectations that might be rationally formed of that nobleman's abilities.

OWEN wrote a tragedy called *Hypermetra*, which was never acted. Dr. TRAPP, however he might have understood the ancients, did not understand his own name as it related to theatrical matters, for he wrote a piece, full of bombast and puerility, called *Abra Mule*. The following specimen of the language will make out my assertion.

Succes, and laurels, shall attend my sword,  
And turn my *harp* into a *harpsichord*.

BLADEN, who was in the army, and afterwards held the post of Comptroller of the Mint, wrote *Solon*, into which was introduced a masque called *Orpheus and Euridice*. His place, however, coined him a better fortune than his play, for it was refused. CHAVES was a merry Andrew, one would imagine, for he wrote a play called *The Cares*, some say *The Cures of Love*, and dedicated it to a Mountebank. Lord GRIMSTON was the author of a play called *The Lawyer's Fortune* \*.

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\* This play is remarkable on account of a whimsical circum-



ESTCOURT, who I shall hereafter speak of when I come to the actors, wrote a play called *The Fair Example*, and an interlude called *Prunella*, which were tolerably well received. NORRIS, son to Jubilee Dicky, and who went on the stage, but with much less reputation than his father, wrote *The Royal Merchant*, which is only an alteration of the *Beggar's Bush*, and a farce called *The Deceit*. STEVENS, who continued DUGDALE's *Monasticon*, and compiled a Spanish Dictionary, wrote a comedy called *An Evening's Intrigue*, almost a literal translation. MICHELBORNE, who was once Governor of Londonderry, and who, after adverse fortunes, was confined in the Fleet, wrote a piece called *Ireland Preserved, or the Siege of Londonderry*. GORING, concerning whom COXETER and others have had some learned disputes, and after all have not been able to clear up whether he was a very obscure person, or whether he took the degree of

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stance it occasioned. It was written when the author was but thirteen, and of course full of imbecility and absurdity; in consequence of which, lord GRIMSTON bought up all the copies he could get. When he stood, however, candidate for St Alban's, the duchess of MARLBOROUGH, who was his strong opponent, got a new edition of it printed at her own expence, with a frontispiece in which the noble author was represented as an elephant dancing on a rope. These were dispersed among the electors, and, why or wherefore, it is difficult to say, for both wisdom and pliability are certainly good parliamentary qualifications, lost him his election.

Master of Arts, which heaven knows he might have done and yet been an obscure person, wrote a tragedy called *Irene*; the celebrated and well known subject on which doctor JOHNSON fabricated his only play,

HENLEY wrote an opera called *Alexander*, which PURCEL set to music. ASTON wrote *Love in a Hurry*, which was written in a hurry and very soon hurried off the stage\*.

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\* This man, known by the name of TONY ASTON, was a very curious character. He was an attorney and turned actor, and being determined to follow the profession in its primitive style, he resorted to all the principal towns in ENGLAND with a performance he called his Medley, which was a farago taken from different plays. His company consisted of himself, his wife, and his son. He was very dexterous in the exertions of his legal abilities, which were frequently called forward in defence of his monopolizing country towns, and he got such a character in this way, and was supposed to understand the spirit of the old laws respecting public exhibitions so well, that he was permitted to speak his sentiments on a bill pending at that time in the House of Commons, for the regulation of the stage.

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## CHAP. XI.

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THE STAGE FROM 1708 TO GARRICK.

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WE have seen that, through the interference of colonel BRETT, whose conduct was certainly dictated by CIBBER, that, in 1708, the Haymarket and Drury Lane were established upon separate interests; the first, under the management of SWINEY, for the exhibition of operas, and the other for plays under the direction of the Patentees, with RICH at their head.

We shall now follow the stage, through all its changes and vicissitudes, from that time to GARRICK's first appearance in Goodman's Fields; which period, almost thirty three years, involves such a variety of circumstances that, though I mean to be perspicuous, I shall not have room to be elaborate.

Operas, which I shall hereafter give a separate

account of, began to receive considerable patronage from the nobility, but they would not probably have kept any material stand upon their own foundation, had the experiment been tried for any length of time, which it was not; for in a year after this new establishment, SWINEY was again joined by the actors, under a new restriction.

The particulars which led to this were as various as they were extraordinary, I shall, therefore, give the reader the most accurate statement I have been able to collect. RICH, who feared that if the theatre should prosper it would bring on the moment of retribution, for the reasons I formerly stated; no sooner felt that the strength of the actors, thus united, brought full houses than, anxious, as CIBBER whimsically has it, of recovering the stage to its former confusion, a conduct incomprehensible to every body but himself, he set about opposing BRETT; who, with CIBBER at his elbow, had certainly begun to work a laudable reformation, and who had studied so well the interests of the different members of the concern, that actors, authors, and patentees, began to have hope of receiving the justice which had been long due to them.

This disastrous event, for so he considered it,

RICH was determined to prevent. He began his measures by tampering with the patentees; and, as he knew that nothing could so completely put them off their guard as his seeming to adopt a semblance of equity, he appeared to deplore that the concern had not been before in a state to render them that justice they were entitled to; but that, now it began to be prosperous, it would be but fair in him and Mr. BRETT to make among them such divisions of the profits as the scheme would bear, by way of bringing up former arrears.

This specious kind of conduct he knew would operate two ways. It would induce the patentees to admit that he would have adopted it before had his ability been equal to his inclination, and it would open BRETT's eyes in such a manner, by exhibiting to him the alarming state in which the concern was involved, great part of which, however, was imaginary, many of the demands being brought forward by his tools and actually his own; that the first would be more patient, under an idea that their losses might be one day or other made up, and the other would grow indifferent, or rather alarmed, as having embarked in a scheme which, let it succeed how it might, stood so little chance of yielding profit, proportionable to the trouble and anxiety attending it.

Both these consequences were the result of RICH's machiavalian scheme. He began to gain the confidence of the patentees, and BRETT began to be discontented, and now, that he might profit by the effects of his duplicity dressed like candour, he caused a friend to suggest to SKIPWITH, who the reader will remember gave up his share to BRETT, that, as the theatre was now become an object of considerable consequence, it would be greatly to his interest to resume his right, under the idea that he had only yielded it up to BRETT in the nature of a loan.

What arguments were upon this occasion held out to SKIPWITH I cannot learn, but it is certainly true that he served BRETT with a Chancery subpoena, alledging that the assignment of the share was only a conveyance in trust. BRETT was piqued at this, and, though he clearly proved that it was neither assigned upon trust nor upon any other limitation whatever; yet, as the world knew he had paid no consideration for it, and as he scorned an obligation under a convention which was so liberally kept, he instantly resigned it, wishing SKIPWITH less trouble and more profit than he himself had experienced.

BRETT immediately withdrew himself from the

concern, and, as the formalities necessary for the reassignment of the share were so considerably delayed, probably through the connivance of RICH, as not to be completed till after the death of SKIPWITH, our subtle politician remained without an opponent except the other patentees, to the management of whom he was pretty well accustomed.

Having occasion for some of these in quality of tools, he now began his next plan of operations, which was as formerly to tyrannize over the actors. He represented to his partners, whom he now affected to consult upon all occasions, that the actors were too well paid and, that if it met with their approbation he should lower their salaries. He, of course, received no opposition, and this very equitable determination was not only resolved on but instantly put into execution. It was not, however, very quietly submitted to. Some remonstrated\*, others grumbled, and others vowed revenge; which, as there was now no other theatre to go to, was treated with perfect indifference.

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\* CIBBER, who argued the matter pretty roundly with the patentees, was told by one of them that even, with his reduced salary, he had more than GOODMAN received, who was a better actor. "That may be true," said CIBBER, "but you will please to recollect that GOODMAN was forced to go upon the highway for a livelihood."

From this time the affairs of the theatre, of course, got into that state which it appears to have been the delight of RICH's life to see them in. The actors grew careless, the houses empty, the patentees discontented; all confidence was destroyed, and the only theatre was, like the goose, cut up for those golden eggs which nothing could produce but time and maturity. In short, being mulct of their immunities, the actors resolved at once to desert the profession or obtain redress.

This last imposition they conceived would be a good ground work for a complaint to the Lord Chamberlain. They found interest to get it preferred and they obtained relief; for an order was immediately issued to the patentees to shew cause why the benefits of the actors had been diminished one third, contrary to common usage. The patentees pleaded that the actors had signed a paper agreeing to this deduction, and had given their receipts for the two thirds as a full compensation. This was declared to have been compulsion on the side of the managers which the actors were too powerless to resist; and the patentees, in answer, insisted that even though it were compulsion it was certainly law. The Lord Chamberlain, nevertheless, warned the



patentees to refuse the actors full justice at their peril.

- So far, however, from listening to this advice, or caring for the consequence of disobeying it, the actors were more oppressed than ever. These grievances were properly represented and well substantiated, and, the very next year after Drury Lane was established upon a foundation, which, had the proprietors been wise, nothing could have shaken, an order was received from the Lord Chamberlain to shut up the house.

This done, SWINEY, now manager of the Haymarket, as we have seen, for the purpose of exhibiting operas only, had his power so extended that he was permitted to enter into a treaty with the principal actors in order to form a company under the direction of such of them as should be chosen by a majority of themselves from their own body; so that plays at the Haymarket might again be united with operas.

The managers pitched upon were WILKS, DOCKET, Mrs. OLDFIELD, and CIBBER, which latter, by every collateral proof I can collect, had been the engine all the way through the business; had stimulated BRETT, had foreseen the folly of RICH

and its consequences, and had felt from the moment he became of any importance to the theatre that he should one day or other be one of its rulers ; which every man must consider as a laudable ambition, since his intention had been all along to take care of its proper interest.

BETTERTON and BOOTH would certainly have been parties in the treaty , but the first was on the point of leaving the stage, and the other had manifested little more than the dawn of that reputation which was afterwards so brilliant. Indeed Mrs. OLDFIELD, who was nominated one of the directors, very wisely proposed to receive two hundred a year, which CIBBER tells us was at last worth six in lieu of a share, and thus WILKS, DOCKET, and CIBBER, but in fact CIBBER only, for he always administered so to the contradictory tempers of his partners as to be the general referee, became managers of the plays, and SWINEY of the operas.

In the mean time, RICH, who had deceived himself with a hope that the prohibition, after due contrition had been manifested and due submission paid, would be taken off, kept together as many of the actors as would stay, and more than he had an inclination to pay. He held the patent and the

broad seal was as visible as ever, and his opinion was, as a lawyer, that it was a stretch of the Lord Chamberlain's power beyond its limits to silence him at all, for that the quarrel with the actors was a private business, and that he was only amenable to the courts of law for his conduct.

Thus he was again playing a double game. If permission to perform had been renewed, he had some actors ready for his purpose, if not, by representing to the patentees the hopeless situation of the concern, he should naturally get the patent exclusively to himself, and possess that supreme power which, whether active or inactive, whether profitable or unprofitable, he had been all his life grasping at. The latter happened. RICH was actually put out of the possession of Drury Lane, and the other patentees I have no doubt from that moment to this, never exhibited a single symptom of laying any further claim to the patent or any of its rights and privileges.

Let us now see how RICH happened to be dispossessed of his theatre. Having made an agreement with the landlords, not for a given price by the year but for three pounds a day whenever it should be opened as a place of entertainment, and the landlords, during the operation of the prohibition, not

having received a single sixpence for rent, they began to repent of the sort of agreement they had entered into, by which a tenant might possess a large premises without being subject to pay any rent, and was casting about in their minds how to oust RICH when a circumstance occurred that completely satisfied them.

A fashionable man, one of the members for CORNWAIL, and a lawyer, of the name of COLLIER, had long considered the management of a theatre a good scheme if it could be divested of all those incumbrances under which it had so long bent down. This man, who was a good match for RICH, exerted his interest at court and procured a licence, for he knew that would answer his purpose as well as a patent established by act of Parliament, for acting plays; and, as he knew the licence must necessarily name the place of performance, he went to the landlords of the Drury Lane theatre, agreed with them upon a larger rent for a lease of those premises, taking it upon his own risk to turn RICH out. Having this lease and this licence in his pocket, he took the advantage of a rejoicing night, when all was tumult and uproar, rushed into the house with a hired mob, and forcibly turned its old occupier into the street.

The novelty of the circumstance for a time turned the tide of public favour on the side of our new adventurers. BOOTH, who had, perhaps, been dissatisfied at not having been admitted into the direction of the Haymarket, headed the actors and certainly began to acquire considerable reputation. Miss SANTLOW also, who had been greatly admired as a dancer, now commenced actress, and her first appearance in the character of the Fair Quaker of Deal, which SHADWELL wrote purposely for her, gained her so much reputation that, says CIBBER, “not the enthusiastic maid of Orleans was more serviceable of old to the French army, when the English had distressed them, than this fair Quaker was, at the head of that dramatic attempt, upon which the support of their weak society depended.”

Let us now return to RICH. He had taken a lease of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields ever since BETTERTON had left it, evidently with a view of preventing his return provided the Haymarket, under VANBRUGH and CONGREVE should have turned out unprofitable, but CIBBER insists that he foresaw all that would happen, and provided himself with an asylum in case of distress. Certainly all his conduct is equal to this; it having always conducted to his

own ends, at the same time that it was incomprehensible to every body else.

Under the influence of this sort of prescience, for so it turned out, he instantly set about building this theatre from the ground; and, though he did not live long enough to see it opened, his son, under the old patent, without any solicitation for its re-  
action, but with perfect indifference as to all consequences, even though it was not given for that theatre, began a new dramatic career which has continued uninterrupted from that hour to this.

The moment CIBBER and his partners got possession of their situation in the Haymarket, they were determined to adopt every spirited idea to deserve the favour and attention of the town. They altered the construction of the theatre, cast their plays in a very judicious style, and began to hope, that by the assistance of the operas, which had hitherto greatly succeeded, the stage would become creditable and productive. They were soon convinced of their error. The operas which had been a novelty the year before began now to fall off; the cause we shall see hereafter. SACHEVERAL's trial also, which was attended by all the first people in the kingdom, and COLLIER's new expedition, with

the assistance of Miss SANTLOW, were also drawbacks; and, though they did not actually fail, yet they had little more to rejoice at than their own emancipation from their old tyranny.

SACHEVERAL'S trial over, which finished with the run of the Fair Quaker of Deal, COLLIER began to find that the tide turned in favour of the Haymarket, he, therefore, determined on a new scheme, in which, for he was a *bon vivant*, and in other respects a favourite with the great, he succeeded. This scheme was neither more nor less than to give up Drury Lane, cloaths, scenes, and actors to SWINEY and his partners, and become himself the sole possessor of the Haymarket and manager of the operas.

To shew the extent of COLLIER'S influence this agreement was clogged with two unpleasant conditions. One was, that, as an exclusive licence for acting plays was held a more profitable thing than one for performing operas, the Drury Lane managers should allow COLLIER two hundred a year, as long as, through his interest at court, all other actors should be interdicted, and the other was that on every Wednesday, the players should be entirely silent, in order to give the opera a fairer chance for a full house.

It is curious to observe how artfully all this was planned. COLLIER from experience began to find that his own knowledge of theatrical matters was insufficient, and that, change as often as he might, no success was to be expected under his management. Thus, when he had stipulated for the possession of the opera house upon such advantageous terms, he had nothing to do but appear to have a reluctance to part with it and he knew he should have plenty of bidders for the situation. This happened exactly as he conjectured. AARON HILL seemed very desirous to treat with him; and, after some difficulty in adjusting the terms, it was at length agreed that he should have possession of the theatre upon paying COLLIER six hundred a year.

To shew, however, that he could do what he pleased; when, upon finding through HILL's management, that the profits began to be considerable, he some how or other found out an informality in the agreement, and took the property back to himself before the season was over; while HILL, who was too wise, or too powerless, to contend with him, relinquished his right without murmuring.

He was now completely outwitted; for, from the



moment he took the direction again, his affairs went backward; finding therefore, that he stood no chance, single handed, of making any public amusement productive, he determined once more to try the influence of his court interest; and, in the most bare-faced manner, so wrought his project to his ends, that SWINEY by a fresh mandate was obliged to change with COLLIER, and take the Haymarket with all its sins upon its head; which sins so operated to its damnation, that SWINEY the next year was obliged to prefer the air of the Continent to the air of a prison.

Nothing could be so unpleasant as the situation that CIBBER and his fellow labourers were driven into by this stretch of power in COLLIER. He became their task master, and dictated what terms he thought proper. Knowing, however, by experience that every thing would go wrong if he attempted exclusively to manage the concern, he thought his wisest way would be to accept of a certainty and make a sinecure of it. He, therefore, demanded six hundred a year, the price at which he had farmed out the opera, and a moiety of the two hundred that had been levied in Drury Lane the year before in aid of the opera; in all seven hundred pounds. By this, indeed, he lost three hundred a year, for

the managers averaged more than a thousand a year each, the whole time he continued at the head of the theatre, which was, however, no longer than the death of the queen in 1714. He did not, after this agreement, for the reasons we have seen, think proper to attempt any alteration, but enjoyed his remuneration and let them work for it.

The theatre for the first time now felt some consequence. DOCKET was naturally frugal; WILKS, if he ran into expence, took care it should be for the interest of the concern; and CIBBER, who knew that the parsimony of the one would operate as a sufficient check upon the extravagance of the other, let them fairly have their way; while he himself studied continually how he might establish decorum, promulgate morality, and in all their money concerns so equitably demean themselves as to secure, what no managers had ever before boasted of, the character of fairness and punctuality in their dealings; and it is remarkable that this conduct was so honourably persevered in, during twenty years from the time this triumvirate began to conduct the theatre, that no tradesman came a second time for his bill, nor was a single author, actor, or other person, employed about the house at any time refused his or her just due, even though there never was, which is a singular

fact, any one agreement in writing executed between them.

The conduct of the theatre being pretty well settled, nothing worthy the attention of the reader passed till 1714, except the admission of BOOTH into the management, and DOGGET's secession, which came about in consequence of the reputation BOOTH acquired in performing Cato. This happened in 1712, great part of which, however, though infinite merit is to be attributed to BOOTH, was owing to the popularity of the play; for, at a part of the season when it was customary to perform but three times a week, it had a run for a month together, except on the Mondays.

DOGGET had long been tormented with the fretful temper of WILKS; and, in spite of CIBBER's conciliatory manner, who generally succeeded in accommodating all difficulties, was at the particular moment when Cato first made its appearance, extremely fore in consequence of his having introduced actors without the general consent, and other disagreeable things. CIBBER, to divert his attention from this, called it to something which he considered as much more material than a few partnership bickerings. This was no less than a suspicion that

BOOTH, having grown so suddenly into fame, would aim at being manager, especially as he had received various marks of favour, and, among the rest, a purse of fifty guineas which had been in one evening collected for him in the boxes.

This circumstance, which really so far from being a remuneration seems to have been very little more than the halfpence formerly thrown on the stage at Sadler's Wells for the rope dancers, DOCKET considered as a thing of consequence; and, forgetting for a moment his quarrel to WILKS, proposed, by way of quelling all ambition in BOOTH, that the managers should spontaneously give him an addition of fifty guineas to the sum already bestowed on him by the public. CIBBER saw that such a measure would awaken his ambition instead of lulling it asleep; but, finding WILKS cordially coincide with DOCKET, he consented to purchase their reconciliation by a means which would at worst do no more than accelerate what perhaps could not be avoided.

On the return of the company from OXFORD, where it had been the custom for them to perform during the act term, and when BOOTH had gathered fresh laurels, the friends of this gentleman suggested to him that he had been too long kept out of that

situation which he had richly merited. He naturally listened to their opinions and accepted the offers of assistance which followed them up, which were at length so efficacious that a new licence was procured, which even COLLIER could not prevent, where BOOTH's name was added to the names of the former managers.

DOGGET remonstrated against this tooth and nail, but to no purpose; till, finding the point carried in spite of his teeth he retired from the concern, determined, however, to demand his profits as they should accrue. This was of course objected to, and he threw the matter into Chancery; where he was decreed six hundred pounds for his share, so that he lost a large sum; for BOOTH had handsomely offered on his coming into the concern to give him five hundred a year for life for his profits.

We now come to the accession of GEORGE the first, when matters completely took a new turn. CIBBER, for in all material points he certainly and very properly was the dictator, grown heartily sick of COLLIER, conceived a very feasible means of fairly getting rid of him. He did not value the seven hundred a year that he had been paid, because he had seen the very great advantage of having their

pretensions backed by a firm friend at court; but the tide of court favour being now completely turned, an idea struck him that he might secure a friend highly popular, with strong interest and rich ability to be serviceable to the theatre itself.

This friend was no other than sir RICHARD STEELE, the solicitation of whose alliance CIBBER saw would procure great popularity for themselves; for it would be considered as a measure not only very judicious but very grateful. STEELE had always loved the theatre, he had bestowed on it some of his labours, and he had by his recommendation of the players in his *Tatlers* given them a consequence that had made them emulous to deserve the characters of gentlemen, and men of honour and respectability. In addition to this, CIBBER, knew STEELE'S influence with the duke of MARLBOROUGH, the hero of his heart, as he emphatically calls him, to whom, to be brief, he applied, and a licence was instantly made out confirming the power in STEELE, CIBBER, WILKS, and BOOTH, and completely dispossessing COLLIER.

In the mean time the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, opened under the son of RICH, the former patentee, who conceived he had a right to exercise a patent which king CHARLES had certainly a right

to grant, and which as certainly no equal power had formally revoked. There is some account of a private declaration to this effect having been made by the king, but this is doubted; and that the prohibition was officially removed cannot possibly be true. It is enough to say that it was suspended by a strain of authority, though the measure was equitable; and, that authority ceasing, the patent resumed its former action.

The success of this theatre was not brilliant, yet it was, for a time, sufficient to check a little the profits of Drury Lane, which induced CIBBER to consider, that, as the licence he and his partners held was only during pleasure, and the other a permanent grant from the crown, it would be a proper thing to procure some better security; to do which he represented to STEELE what were his sentiments on the subject, and also submitted to him as COLLIER's pension, which he now enjoyed, was given on condition that it should be only payable during the time Drury Lane should perform exclusively, whether it would not be fair, instead of granting him a positive sum, to admit him a partner on a proportionable share.

STEELE's answer to this proposition was; that as he came among them by their own invitation, he

should always think himself obliged to come into any measures for their use and safety; and, with these sentiments, he not only handsomely acceded to their proposal, but procured a patent for his own life and three years afterwards, which he assigned over to them, and confirmed to them a right in the whole property, on which he had certainly not expended any thing, reserving to himself a fourth of the profits for his interest and assistance.

This generous and moderate conduct of STEELE was rewarded; for, instead of seven hundred a year during his life, it yielded him a thousand, except those drawbacks which he had incurred by the neglect of his own affairs, which he managed so imprudently that they were almost always in trust; and thus the best part of his fortune was continually scrambled for by the lawyers.

The grant for this patent having given to Drury Lane a permanent security, the managers went on very spiritedly. They laid out six hundred pounds upon DRYDEN'S *All for Love*, and got up other pieces with equal splendour; till every art was practised by their enemies, and, among other things, a report was propagated that the foundation of the theatre was



unsafe, and that the building would certainly fall upon the heads of the audience. This calumny only fell, however, on the heads of the calumniators, for fir THOMAS HEWET, having surveyed it by an order from the king, and signed an attestation, which was printed in the newspapers, that it was perfectly safe and in sound condition, the Spectators, who had kept away during the alarm, now came in much greater numbers.

These fortunate circumstances, together with the unremitting industry of the managers, gained them so decided a superiority over their opponents in Lincoln's Inn Fields that these last were soon obliged to call in foreign aid, and this gave birth to those pantomimes, which RICH brought forward with such wonderful success, and which have given rise, or at least efficaciously revived, those spectacles which have so often disgraced and vitiated the national taste\*.

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\* It is curious that FIELDING and CIBBER, who heartily hated each other, and who thought differently on every other subject, should completely coincide on this. FIELDING wrote a very sensible treatise to shew that the encrease of robberies in this kingdom was entirely owing to the gin shops, where the poor people so intoxicated their senses as to make them ripe for all manner of vice. In consequence of this treatise, and some other representations, an act passed to put down those nuisances. CIBBER in like manner calls these

As the respectability with which Diury Lane was conducted, and the show and finery introduced at Lincoln's Inns Fields, attracted their separate admirers to such a degree as to be productive to both theatres, very little happened for many years, except a few struggles, the particulars of which, though in some degree curious, it will be impossible to enumerate here, to obstruct that mutual emulation which though not always creditable, generally brought with it a proportionable profit.

As, however, the chapter of numbers does not by any means include the judicious, RICH, in progress of time, carried the greatest number of votes, and CIBBER was, at length, with great reluctance it must be confessed, obliged to sail with the stream, and to strengthen the reputation of SHAKESPEAR, by the magic power of Harlequin. Being asked why he did this, he answered, he did it against his conscience, but that he had not virtue enough to starve by opposing a multitude that would have been too hard for him.

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spectacles the gin shops of the stage, which intoxicate its auditors, dishonour their understandings, and introduce a levity that renders them ripe for every kind of profligacy. Pity that the morals of the more enlightened were not as worthy the attention of the legislature as those of the vulgar. The avenues of the theatres would then, perhaps, less resemble brothels.

In this manner did the two theatres persevere in their different efforts till the death of sir RICHARD STEELE, which happened in 1729, for their private disputes never effected their public interest. As to RICH, he was remarkably fortunate, which is not very wonderful when we consider he had all the fools on his side, but he was the vainest and perhaps the most ignorant of all human beings, and therefore it will not be wondered at, that, as he drew all his fortune from foreign auxiliaries they should have both cunning and knavery enough to draw it from him. In short he was always successful and always poor, and would, perhaps, have been obliged to put the patent, which his father had been at such unwearied and such very honest pains to reserve for him, to who bids most, if *The Beggar's Opera* had not licked him whole.

The only interruption the harmony of the Drury Lane partnership experienced was the absence of STEELE, in 1720, when his affairs were become so distracted that he grew careless of all engagements. There has been another interruption mentioned which I cannot find the smallest ground for crediting. We read that CIBBER having somehow offended the duke of NEWCASTLE, in the year 1720, he not only forbid him to perform but that, being after-

wards offended by STEELE, he actually silenced the patent, but by a remonstrance, or some other way, it was amicably adjusted, though the only reporter of this anecdote does not know what way.

All I have to offer in opposition to this relation is that I cannot find the smallest trace of this circumstance either in the lives of STEELE or CIBBER, not even in the accounts of them written by the author of the above assertion. The theatre was certainly never silenced, and, as to CIBBER's having disoblged the duke of NEWCASTLE, he speaks of that nobleman in terms of the highest respect, and instances a circumstance of self denial, and disinterestedness, as a proof of his attention to the managers, and a motive of their gratitude to him. I take the fact to be, that, as STEELE opposed the peerage bill in the House of Commons, and consequently grew out of court favour, and as he gained that favour in a stronger degree than ever by his spirited strictures against the mischievous South Sea scheme, the mistake has arisen from a supposition that the theatre as well as the office he held was during that interval suspended, but this is impossible; for, to make it out, the theatre must have been shut up for three years, whereas no mention is made, except by this author, of its having stopt for a single day.

The interruption I am going to mention was not of a public nature, therefore it includes no suspension of the theatre. STEELE, whose affairs, the larger his fortune, were ever the more perplexed, had, about 1723, so got into the hands of the lawyers that every thing was in various ways made over in trust. In consequence of this the theatre, which had derived great advantage from his attendance and assistance, besides the countenance he was enabled to procure it through the means of his fashionable connections, was like every thing else neglected. CIBBER, who had born this quietly for three years, was anxious to recal him both to his duty and a due attention to his own concerns, and therefore, as there was no getting at him otherwise than officially, "for," says he, "being in the clutches of the lawyers, the friend or the gentleman had nothing more to do in the matter," served him with a sort of notice that as he had thought proper to absent himself from the concerns, which by the articles of partnership he was equally bound to attend to with the rest, they should expect to be paid for the trouble of doing his business, and therefore should charge him one pound, thirteen shillings, and four pence a day for their extra trouble. This was a good handle for his law friends, who, having his affairs completely in their management, threw the matter immediately into Chancery.

This affair came to a hearing before sir JOSEPH JEKYLL, the Master of the Rolls, in 1726. CIBBER pleaded in behalf of himself, BOOTH, and WILKS, and it must be confessed his observations were not more fair and manly than they were handsome and friendly towards STEELE, even though the attorneys in drawing the bill had foisted in some paltry things which reminded the other partners under what obligations they were to him from his public writings in the *Tatlers*, and other things, which by the way had been the original source of their gratitude, and occasioned his being called in to make one in the management of the theatre. In short, CIBBER pleaded so effectually, that his prayer was allowed without the trouble and expence of a hearing before the Lord Chancellor, “and the parties were “heartily glad,” says he, “to let this be the last of “their law suits.”

It should seem as if the fate of the *Beggar's Opera*, which was said to make RICH gay, and GAY rich, was to decide the fate of Drury Lane. It came out in 1728, and from that hour the other theatre went gradually to its dissolution, I mean as to reputation, which was never revived again till GARRICK took the management. In 1729, STEELE died. Mrs. OLDFIELD died in 1730, BOOTH was

rendered incapable of performing by his illness, Mrs. PORTER was lost to the theatre by the dislocation of a limb, and in 1731, death took off WILKS.

The following year, the term for which the patent had been granted expired, and CIBBER found no difficulty in getting it renewed for twenty-one years in behalf of BOOTH, Mrs. WILKS, and himself. BOOTH immediately resolved to part with what he could of his share, and, finding a purchaser in a gentleman of the name of HIGHMORE, who unfortunately had attached himself to the stage from having performed *Lothario* for his amusement, this adventurer entered into his views and gave him for the possession of half his proportion two thousand five hundred pounds.

CIBBER began now to think what would be his most politic line of conduct. Besides this Mr. HIGHMORE, who knew nothing of managing, Mrs. WILKS had put in a Mr. ELLIS to act, or rather to manage for her, who was still less qualified for the task; and, if CIBBER had found it difficult to pilot the theatrical bark through all the breezes that had been raised by WILKS and DOGGET, who were after all expert mariners, what must have been his trouble

and danger to have the same task to perform in worse weather, assisted only by those who, so far from being able to steer, scarcely knew the construction of the vessel in which they were embarked.

Thus situated he determined upon getting rid of the concern as soon as possible, and therefore deputed his son THEOPHILUS, who he knew would be a complete torment to them, to act for him; and his foresight was so correct that HIGHMORE, at the end of the season, came to him with an offer of three thousand guineas for his share, which was only six hundred and twenty-five pounds more than he had paid BOOTH for half of his. CIBBER, however, was determined, as he tells us, to let it go to the highest bidder, and, therefore, closed with the proposal.

One reason for this, perhaps, was the ruinous state into which the theatre was likely to be plunged; which, having seen, he persuaded Mrs. BOOTH, her husband being now dead, to get rid of the remainder of her share, with which she parted upon low terms to GIFFARD. As to Mrs. WILKS she was glad enough to take what she could get for her proportion when FLEETWOOD came afterwards to purchase the



property, the particulars of which we shall presently see.

HIGHMORE's affairs began to wear a very alarming aspect. In the year 1720, a man of the name of POTTER, a carpenter, merely to please his fancy, for it is difficult to say, unless he was inspired with some of old RICH's prescience, upon what other speculation he could carry so expensive a plan into effect, built a theatre in the Haymarket. This theatre had remained unoccupied thirteen years, when it struck young CIBBER, that if he could persuade some of the actors to revolt, they might at least get a temporary sum by bringing forward some novelty at this place. The performers he founded upon this subject relished the scheme, they instantly applied to POTTER, who was glad enough to turn to advantage a property that had lain so long upon his hands, and in a very short time, without the smallest authority, opened this house with the comedy of *Love for Love*, in imitation of BETTERTON and his adventurers formerly in Lincoln's Inns Fields.

At first HIGHMORE did not regard this, but opened Drury Lane at the usual time. When, however, he found he could make no stand against his principal actors who had now deserted him, not

even with his own performance of Lothario, his hopeless condition stared him in the face. He instantly, therefore, applied to the Lord Chamberlain, and employed proper persons to put in force the laws against vagrants, but, by cunning and evasions they contrived to hold out so long; that having but little personal interest, and very soon as little personal property, he was glad enough to give up the contention, heartily wishing he had never vainly conceived himself qualified to perform Lothario.

The ragged fortune of this manager was taken up by the more ragged fortune of the next, who's name was FLEETWOOD. He certainly got hold of the property at a much lower rate than any of his predecessors, but which property sunk him into more ruin, which was needless, than ever. It is supposed that he paid not more than two thousand pounds for the whole property; but whatever it was, it is allowed on all hands it not only stripped him of his last guinea but left him considerably in debt.

It had one good effect however. The revolvers had by this time enough of their frolic, and FLEETWOOD, being perfectly a gentleman and a convivial character, they returned to their old quarters. With

CIBBER, however, all idea of real management had left the theatre; besides a spirit of dramatic enterprise began now to be the rage. In 1729, a man of the name of ODELL had built a theatre in Goodman's Fields, which was attacked by the citizens, and preached against by the clergy, under the idea that it would be productive of mischief so near to the seat of commerce. He opened it nevertheless, but was under the necessity in a short time of shutting it, though his success had been very promising.

At this time, however, GIFFARD, who had got rid of his small share in Drury Lane, solicited a subscription for another theatre in Goodman's Fields, and actually opened it in 1732. RICH too, who was also determined to enterprise, was at this time building Covent Garden theatre, which opened, for the first time in 1733. GIFFARD soon after, finding his Goodman's Fields scheme unproductive, was advised to repair to the vacant house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, that RICH had abandoned, and he opened it in 1735, and actually without any authority, unless there was a convention between him and RICH for the use of the dormant patent, which has been no bad stalking horse at times, performed there for two years.

Thus in proportion as theatrical abilities decreased, theatres became more numerous. Covent Garden, however, with RICH and his pantomimes decidedly carried every thing before them. FLEETWOOD, who was one of those prodigies in life which people gaze at but cannot understand, who without a visible fixpence of his own continued to lavish away thousands, bustled on with Drury Lane for more than ten years, during all which time the theatre continued in every distress, and laboured under every inconvenience; but what renders the circumstance so extraordinary as to be scarcely credible is that though authors, actors, dancers, nay carpenters, scene shifters, dressers, fire lighters, and the whole theatrical train which CIBBER enumerated in his speech before the Master of the Rolls to the tune of a hundred and forty, besides the long list of supernumeraries, scarcely gleaned from the profits money sufficient to sustain existence, while their profligate manager was figuring away and enjoying every luxury in the company of some of the first people in the kingdom.

There must have been something peculiarly fascinating in this man. To be individually indebted to all the members of his theatre, to treat them at the same time with as much hauteur and contempt as if they

had been his slaves, and contrive to make them submit to all this inconvenience and contumely, not only without murmuring but with chearfulness, is a trait of insolent presumption on one side, and of tame submission on the other, so unaccountable, that it is impossible to find a motive for it. Had there been any prospect of amendment in their fortune, had this manager in any one single instance kept his word, or had they, in short, any thing like a glimpse of hope, from inclination, if not from ability, to receive the smallest justice at his hands, it would have been something; but to go on earning for him the bread he eat, or rather lavished upon others, to witness every day his accumulated inconveniencies, arrears, executions, and all the horrors of legal prosecution, and yet remain insensible to the distresses of themselves and their families, and still go on, would exceed credibility if we did not know that in this statement there is not the least exaggeration\*.

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\* The old story is very well known about WOOD the treasurer. One Saturday morning when the actors were kicking their heels at the door of the treasury, where they had attended in vain on the same day for many weeks, one of their companions came out with a discontented countenance. "Well," said another, "I suppose there's no cole to be had this morning." "Not a doit," says the first. "Well then," said one of them dryly, "if there's no cole, we must burn WOOD." But a friend of mine speaking of

This was the time for adventurers to take the advantage of the folly of Covent Garden, and the distraction of Drury Lane. Nothing of this kind, however, would probably have been very formidable if the celebrated HENRY FIELDING, who became tremblingly alive to a great variety of real or imaginary injuries both from the great and theatrical managers, had not thrust himself forward and got together a set of performers. He called them the Great Mogul's Company, and brought out *ad libitum* pieces at the theatre in the Haymarket.

The first performance was called *Pasquin*, which was astonishingly followed for upwards of fifty nights. The piece itself we shall by and by examine. It was a bold, and certainly an unwarrantable satire. This was followed by the *Historical Register*, written in the same style of invective. These pieces were not immediately stopped, but they were considered of such a tendency as to demand an interference of the legislature; for which purpose, as the history is, a performance, full of the

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FLEETWOOD very highly extolled his ingenuity and compared him to MOSES, who kept so many people starving in the wilderness, and yet contented. "I grant you," said another, "he has the ingenuity of MOSES, 'tis a pity he has not his honesty, for, when the manna came, MOSES liberally gave his companions their full share."

same personal satire against the great, was anonymously sent to GIFFARD, who had at that time returned to Goodman's Fields, with a private intimation, however, that he should refuse to perform it, and give it up into the hands of government as a thing improper to bring before the public.

This piece was called *The Golden Rump*, and some think it was a scheme of GIFFARD and his friends to procure favour, and perhaps a gratuity. Both these consequences happened, for GIFFARD received a handsome sum, and was highly applauded for his constitutional conduct; and, upon this ground, a bill was immediately brought into Parliament; the present existing bill, which limits the number of theatres, and obliges all managers to submit the copies of every thing dramatic to the inspection of a licencer.

As many have taken the liberty of censuring this measure, conscious, probably, that their own writings could not stand a test which would weed them of licentiousness and immorality, it is a proper thing here to shew that there was nothing novel in this proceeding, but the manner of its being regulated into a positive law. Those who have looked over this history will see that the power of the Lord

Chamberlain had always at least this operation, and Stow entered into it so much with the same spirit, and the same understanding of the subject, that nothing new could, during the contention, or can now, be offered to alter the question, or to refute the propriety of the measure.

My Lord CHESTERFIELD, that public moralizer and private advocate for every thing wicked and profligate, certainly spoke against the question; and with all the slimy speciousness with which it was his custom to gloss over rotten arguments, affected to tremble at the blow about to be given to our liberties through an act meant to restrain authors and actors within those limits which, were they not observed, would be a disgrace to them and to society. Licentiousness and its concomitant, sedition, are the bane of literature in this country, and no honest writer will ever murmur at their being kept within their proper bounds.

No man in his senses can deny that the measure was perfectly necessary. If it was considered as a stretch of power, at different periods, to suspend the theatre for a time on account of impropriety of conduct in authors, actors, or managers, it became high time for that power to be regulated and receive a le-



gal sanction. The exercise of the power according to circumstances had never been altered nor disputed. The *Maid's Tragedy*, *Lucius Junius Brutus*, DRYDEN'S Prologue to the *Prophetess*, *Mary Queen of Scots*, and a variety of other things had been refused licences. This is a proof that licences were asked for, and that this was usual, otherwise they could not have been refused. All, therefore, that was now done went no farther than to consolidate a wholesome custom sanctioned by several local laws into one effectual law; the fact remained exactly as before. The conduct of the Lord Chamberlain, which crafty men chose, prior to this act, to represent as undefinable, was now precisely fixed and settled, and in such a way that no person could from that time affect to misunderstand it.

Nothing can prove this more clearly than the fact already hinted at, of TONY ASTON'S having been admitted to speak upon a similar act, which had been moved for, two years earlier, before FIELDING brought out *Pasquin*; and this shews, by the way, that the ministry wanted no such stimulus as *Pasquin*, or *The Historical Register*, or *The Golden Rump*; and that it was the opening of the theatre in the Haymarket and that in Goodman's Fields, in defiance of all law, that was considered as the offence rather than any strictures on his personal conduct.

The fact is, grievancees had always existed; we see them in this history frequently and variously enumerated, and an attempt to get rid of them, and to shew the public at once, and the different members of theatres, the proper regulations on which they either could or ought to be carried on, was as much a compliment to those interested in them. as it was a measure due to the dignity of the law. The difficult lay in constructing such an act as should be shielded from all misconstruction, and this they had not properly considered in the first act they brought in; which, as we have seen, was got rid of through the arguments of TONY ASTON, and this is a strong proof how desirous the ministry were of not infringing upon established usage.

This man was bred a lawyer, and the study of his life had been to watch those laws concerning theatres, and for the most natural reason in the world. He was himself a vagrant, and was perpetually setting the laws at defiance. His honest exposition, therefore, of the manner in which he had evaded them was the best lesson that could be how to frame such a law as no man could possibly evade. This he convinced them they had not been able to do, for he pointed out so many loop holes in the bill they brought in, that they took it back and two years afterwards passed this in question; which, through

those hints, and upon mature consideration they conceived liable to no further objection.

In this they were perfectly right, for nothing but cavil has been levelled against it, and this shews that TONY ASHTON was a better, or least an honester, parliamentary speaker than Lord CHESTERFIELD; for TONY, having evaded the law, fairly shewed in what manner he had done so, and acknowledged the new act as a salutary measure, to prevent evasion in others; while my Lord shirked the question, and affected to lament future consequences that could have no possible operation. for fear, perhaps, the licentiousness of writers should receive wholesome restraint.

As there had been nothing like management since CIBBER, RICH alone through his foreign levies was successful. The test, branching into different factions became weakened and irregular. We have seen GIFFARD open and shut his theatre in Goodman's Fields as he was impelled by difference of fortune, and we have seen FIELDING oppose theatres, and ministers, with the greatest success for one season, and sink into nothing the year following. FLEETWOOD, who with all his companionable qualities, and adroitness in pocketing the receipts of the house, would have found them so unproductive as to have

had nothing to remark, had he not called in assistance to the reader's mind.

The theatre would not have bettered its success however by this step, had not MACKLIN been chosen one of the assistants; who paid the same attention to the real interest of the concern as his coadjutor young CIBBER did to the finery and decorations; and, though no material advantage immediately accrued from his judgment in the selection of proper performers, yet it begat a sort of dawn or promise of another era, likely to be as pre-eminently great as that in which the stage had been supported by those actors whose absence the town now very justly and very sincerely regretted.

QUIN began now to be known, and MILWARD; and Mrs. CIBBER, who had been a favourite singer, all of a sudden astonished the public by her admirable performance of Zara. And now the licensing act being passed, and theatrical merit confined to one point, many candidates for public favour made their appearance; till, at length, to sanction their labours and confirm their reputation, the world were astonished and delighted with a new and extraordinary object of theatrical excellence, in GARRICK.

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## CHAP. XII.

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ACTORS.

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EVERY thing that relates to genius and mental intelligence, is both ascertained and improved by comparison. Thus authors and actors have succeeded best when they have appeared in clusters. We say the wits of ELIZABETH, and the wits of CHARLES the second, and upon the same principle, just as we now lament that there remain very few members of the school of GARRICK, so in CIBBER's time, at least after 1708, they began to deplore the decline of the school of BETFERTON.

We have seen already that acting, after that great man, relaxed as a representation of nature, and that WILKS and CIBBER, who were not gifted actors, intuitive utterers of passion and sensibility, supplied these requisites by sound judgment, and strong discernment.

WILKS was an Irishman, and had never dreamt

of being an actor, but had drudged on in the Secretary of State's office, till some private persons gave a play gratis. The play was *Othello*, and WILKS acted the Moor; from which moment, though he was conscious how many disadvantages he had to struggle with, he determined to quit his situation, by which his successor acquired a fortune of fifty thousand pounds, and attach himself wholly to the stage.

With a view of getting at once into fame, he came to ENGLAND, but, being neglected for a considerable time, he could not brook like CIBBER this inaction, and contumely, and, therefore, returned to DUBLIN, where having gained experience, he once more came to ENGLAND, and, an opportunity being now open to him, by poor MONTFORD's unfortunate death, of trying his fortune, he began soon to be received by the public as a very sensible if not a very excellent actor. I have shewn how completely he overpowered POWELL merely by diligence and attention\*. But I must confine myself to WILKS as an actor.

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\* CIBBER tells us that WILKS considered this diligence as so indispensable a duty to the public, that he seemed to love it as good men do virtue for its own sake; for that he has known him swallow a volume of froth and insipidity in a new play, which had no merit

WILKS seems to have had many radical imperfections, like CIBBER, which he was obliged to soften, and conceal by various arts. These arts at last became a standard, and have ever since been resorted to by all those whose merit, as actors have been derived from information, understanding, and a strong comprehension of the passions and their motives; but to whom nature has denied either person or voice, or some other of those prominent requisites without which an actor, with the best conception, must have to struggle against the stream; just as CHURCHILL complains that O'BRIEN croaked because WOODWARD had croaked before, and thus we find RYAN, HAVARD, and even the erudite and valuable SHE-

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but being recommended by a person of quality, and would not live three nights. He gives among several instances of WILKS's extraordinary patience in this way, the following example

In some new comedy, he happened to complain of a crabbed "speech in his part, which", he said, "gave him more trouble to study, than all the rest of it had done; upon which, he applied to the author, either to soften, or shorten it. The author, that he might make the matter quite easy to him, fairly cut it all out. But when he got home, from the rehearsal, WILKS thought it such an indignity to his memory that any thing should be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himself perfect in that speech, though he knew it was never to be made use of. From this singular act of supererogation, you may judge, how indefatigable the labour of his memory must have been, when his profit and honour were more concerned to make use of it."

RIDAN, all mannerists in this way who were obliged in the absence of those primary and essential qualities to substitute system for nature.

WILKS, in this way, is represented as having an inharmonious voice, which obliged him, when he gave a loose to that spirit which he possessed in an uncommon degree, to cut his accents short and render that risible that ought to have been solemn, and mimicry which was intended for humour. All this, however, he so corrected and took such indefatigable pains to conquer, that, as it gradually reduced and the public became gradually acquainted with it, he was at last considered as a perfect actor. and it was agreed, by the time his friend FARQUHAR wrote *Sir Harry Wildair*, that acting had never been superior to WILKS; forgetting that custom will vitiate the public understanding, and make that appear at one time delectable, that at another would have been only endurable; which is only saying, of the period of which we are now speaking, that, at the time of BETTERTON, acting was far superior to what it was in the time of CIBBER, and, in the time of GARRICK, to what it is at the present day.

To shew, however, that it is extremely difficult to distinguish real merit, and a correct taste in the



public to relish and reward it, and that the vernacular excellence in acting, which seems to run in veins as the different strata in mines, was yet known and practised, it had certainly descended from BETTERTON to BOOTH. When Sir RICHARD STEELE read a part of *Cato* to CIBBER, seven years before it was acted, and when BOOTH was about nineteen, "Good God," exclaimed he, "what a part would BETTERTON have made of *Cato*!" BOOTH, who had paid every attention both privately and publicly to the instructions of BETTERTON, made a fortune by this very part.

This actor, added to the great natural requisites of a fine person, a good voice, and a graceful and dignified deportment, the advantages derived from a sound understanding, and a classical education. His style of acting was altogether tragedy, in which, however, he is said to have in some degree cramped nature by lacing the buskin too tight. This, however, only appeared upon a comparison with BETTERTON, for BOOTH had strong sterling merit, and no doubt contributed a great deal towards keeping the more dignified parts of the drama in that estimable respect which constitutes its best reputation.

DOGGET, as we are informed from good and impartial authority, was the most original and the strictest

observer of nature of all the actors then living. He was ridiculous without impropriety, he had a different look for every different kind of humour, and, though he was an excellent mimic, he imitated nothing but nature. In comic songs and dances he was admirable; and, if the description of his performance of Ben in *Love for Love* be correct, that part has certainly never been performed since to any degree of perfection. He was a great observer of nature, and particularly delighted at catching the manners in low life, as CONGREVE is said to have gone to Wapping to write *Ben*, GAY to Newgate to furnish his *Beggar's Opera*, or as SWIFT used to listen for hours to the low Irish; but, with all this, the acting of DOCCET was so chaste, and his manners in private life so well bred, that, though he never chose to be the actor any where but on the stage, yet his company was warmly sought after by persons of rank and taste.

ESTCOURT, who was born at Tewksbury, had from his infancy a taste for acting, and particularly mimicry. At fifteen he ran away from his friends and was caught by his father in the very act of performing *Roxana* at Worcester. He was so dreadfully alarmed that he borrowed some cloaths of one of the itinerant ladies and instantly left Alexander to

his fate; nor did he stop till he reached Chipping Norton; where, beds being scarce, he was obliged to take up with that of the daughter at the inn, who undertook to sit up; but, finding herself sleepy, and not conceiving there would be any possible harm in going to bed to one of her own sex, was on the point of visiting ESTCOURT, who was fast asleep, had she not by some means discovered her error.

The poor comedian was now taken for a thief, and upon the point of being conveyed to a horse pond, when a person from his father, who had enquired his track, entered the house, satisfied the landlord, and conveyed the young gentleman home.

He was now bound apprentice, but nothing could hold him, and he took a speedy opportunity of going to Ireland, where he was received on the stage, and soon made a considerable progress. CRESSER says he was so amazing and extraordinary a mimic, that no man nor woman, from the coquette to the privy councillor, ever moved or spoke before him, that he could not carry their voice, look, mein, and motion, instantly into another company, But this, however, was the boundary of his merit; and though he is said to have on the part of Falstaff written notes and observations upon every

speech, describing the true spirit of the humour, and the tone, look, and gesture with which it ought to be delivered, yet, when he came on the stage, there was a flatness and an insipidity, in his acting that showed he could greatly conceive, but had not the power to execute. Great mimics, however, are never great actors, and the reason is obvious as daylight. Mimicry is an imitation of particular men, and, therefore, vapid and full of peculiarity. Acting is an imitation of all mankind, and, therefore, interesting and full of nature; or, in other words, nothing is so erroneous as to hit manners through men, whereas nothing is so sure as to hit men through manners.

ESTCOURT, however, was as great a character, with the golden gridiron round his neck at the Beef Steak Club, as he was insignificant, considering his general talents, on the stage, and that he was humane, polished, and witty, STEELE has given a most friendly and eloquent certificate, by his charming and manly eulogium of this popular favourite in the *Tatler*.

NORRIS, whose mother was the earliest English actress, and who we have already known by the title of Jubilee Dicky, must have been, as well as NORRIS

an actor like WESTON. Unconscious himself that he did any thing more than utter his audiences were constantly in a roar. In all characters of inveterate simplicity, he was exactly what he represented, but we are told he seemed most particularly formed to represent a cuckold. CIBBER once performed Barnaby Brittle and asked Mrs. OLDFIELD, who acted the wife, how she liked him. "Not half so well as NORRIS," said she, "he looks ten times more like a cuckold than you do."

Besides these, a large number might be enumerated and every one entitled to some particular praise. KEEN was a very respectable actor, so was MILWARD; GRIFFITH has claims to commendation, so had BROWN, so had CROSS, so had TREFUSIS, which last was the original Sir SAMPSON LEGEND. The elder and younger MILLS, and many others, which the dramatis personæ of the tragedies and comedies then brought out, will distinguish, and many on whom I shall further enlarge hereafter, such as QUIN and RYAN, had at that time started on the theatrical course and began a very creditable career, but at best they cannot, whatever was their diligence, their propriety, their proper attention to the pleasure of the public, and their own reputation, stand against the galaxy of talents composed by BETTERTON and his satellites.

All these remarks, with very little exception, apply to the females. MIS. BOOTH, MRS. PORTER, and others were imitators of MRS. BARRY, MIS. BETTERTON, and the rest. It would be injustice, however, not to mention MIS. OLDFIELD who was a wonderful acquisition to the theatre, and in particular, because her talents were so diversified.

This actress seems to have possessed some portion of every requisite that characterized the merit of the old school. Her performance embraced almost every description of tragedy and comedy. She, like most of the female performers who have arrived to great excellence, continued for a time unheeded. FARQUHAR who heard her by accident reading a play expressed great astonishment at the propriety with which she interested his feelings, and pronounced her formed by nature for an actress, which opinion was strongly confirmed when he found her in the bloom of youth, and full of grace, elegance and beauty.

WILKS, FARQUHAR'S particular friend, was then in IRELAND; he, however, recommended her in very warm terms to VANBRUGH, who engaged her; but it was not till after she had performed three or four parts that the town, or the performers

perceived in her symptoms of extraordinary merit. CIBBER himself, who was certainly not only a consummate judge, but who was of course catching at every opportunity to embellish his own plays with the best talents the theatre had to boast, confesses he thought very little of her till she performed Leonora in *Sir Country Nice*, a character after all not very advantageous to the performer. He says that even in that, when she rehearsed with him, he had but a poor opinion of her, but having opportunity of paying her attention, her scenes lying almost entirely with him, she not only surprized him in her own acting, but animated him into a style of acting himself that both delighted and astonished him.

In consequence of this he determined to finish *The Careless Husband*, which had lain by some time for want of a Lady Betty Modish, and he was afterwards proud to own that the great and extraordinary success that piece met with was principally owing to this admirable actress. It was very handsome and very honourable to pay this tribute to her public merit, but, having through this discovery found out also that her private worth and accomplishments were as great and extraordinary, he takes an honourable pleasure in adding that he has seen her in private societies where people of the first rank and distinction,

might have borrowed her manners, her understanding, and her deportment, to their infinite advantage and edification.

With this excellent performer, however, disappeared all that was admirable in acting; nor did it appear again to any degree of splendour, till GARRICK led that genius, which now began to dawn indeed, but, which wanted his genial co-operation to burst into any thing like expansion.

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## CHAP. XI.

THE STAGE.

MANY and very sufficient authorities may be quoted to prove that in IRELAND as in ENGLAND the dramatic art was known very early. Every ancient and noble family had its bard, the kings had their poet laureats. and these poets were held for their wisdom and genius in such high estimation that they occupied seats in the triennial councils, as the following translation from the original Irish will prove.

The King was seated on a royal throne,  
 And on his face majestic greatness shone.  
 Around him, summoned by his strict command,  
 The peers, the priests, the commons of the land,  
 The bards, or poets, are allowed a place,  
 And men of learning the assembly grace.

And, further on, we are told what was the employment of a poet.

Poets are to applaud, or boldly blame,  
 And justly to give intamy, or fame.

For without them, the brightest laurels fade,  
And daring vice is in oblivion laid.

And thus we have the principles of the Grecian drama adopted in IRELAND long before the incursions of the Danes\*. Plays were acted at the Castle

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\* But it is astonishing to what a remote period we may carry back Irish learning if history is to be credited. The Irish History informs us, that Prince GADCLUS, of the Milesian race, in his travels visited PHARAOH, king of EGYPT, fell in love with SCOTA, the king's daughter, and married her. This GADCLUS, or GADDEL, for the royal records of TARAH call him by both names, in EGYPT was stung by a serpent as he lay asleep, and was healed by the prophet MOSES. The Irish is thus elegantly translated by a native bard.

The hissing serpent, eager for his prey,  
Ascend'd the couch where sleeping GADCL lay  
In winding grazes there himself he roll'd,  
And leap'd upon him with a dreadful fold,  
And brook his forked tongue, and then around  
His neck he twist'd, and gave a deadly wound.  
The subtle poison spreads thro' ev'ry vein,  
No art, no juice of herbs, can ease the pain;  
Till MOSES, with his never-failing wand,  
Touch'd the raw wound, which heal'd at his command.

When GADCLUS, with his wife SCOTA, from this prince's IRELAND was first called SCOTA, and his followers, were leaving EGYPT to settle in some new colony, the following prophecy was declared by MOSES, translated by the same elegant hand

The holy prophet was inspir'd, to see  
Into events of dark futurity.

in DUBLIN, when BLOUNT, Lord Mountjoy, was Lord Lieutenant towards the latter end of Queen ELIZABETH's reign. Of this there are various proofs but it does not appear that there was any established theatre till 1635, when the Earl of STRAFORD was viceroy, and it should seem that this is very probably the fact, because OGILBY, historiographer to the king, was made the first Master of the Revels in the kingdom of IRELAND.

This theatre was built in Warburgh street, where a regular company of actors continued to represent the celebrated pieces of that time, till 1641; when, upon the breaking out of the rebellion, all amusements were of course suspended, and we hear nothing more of the theatre till 1661, when a new one

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And said, for thee, young prince, has Heav'n in store  
 Blessings, that mortals ne'er enjoy'd before.  
 From whoso'er the royal line shall come,  
 Fruitful shall be their land, and safe their home,  
 No poisonous snake or serpent shall deface  
 The beauty of the fields, or taint the grass;  
 No noisome reptile, with invenom'd teeth,  
 Shall ever swell that land, or be the cause of death.  
 But innocence and arts shall flourish there,  
 And learning in its lovely shapes appear:  
 The Poets there shall in their songs proclaim  
 Thy glorious acts, and never dying name

was built in Smock Alley, at the instance, in some measure as it should seem of the famous CATHERINE PHILLIPS, the famed Orinda, or the English Sappho, as we have seen her already variously called, her tragedy of *Pompey* having been first performed there from which circumstance it is facetiously said by some authors, the place took that name, it having been before that time called Orange street.

In 1671 part of the theatre in Smock Alley fell down, and it does not appear that any other was established till some time after the Revolution, when it so happened that ASHBURY, the Master of the Revels, was not only desirous of encouraging acting, but was a very good actor himself; for, in 1691, in a new theatre built upon the ruins of the old one, we find him performing Iago, and instructing a number of young actors, among whom were WILKS, BOOTH, KEEN, ESTCOURT, NORRIS, GRIFFITH, BOWEN, CROSS, and TREFUSIS. The actresses I apprehend were not capital, for I don't find that any of them crossed the Shannon\*.

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\* Mr. ASHBURY from his infancy had a talent for acting. He taught Queen ANNE, when she was only princess, the part of Semandra in *Mitridates*, *King of Pontus*, which was performed at the Banquet-

Thus the Irish theatre, though so recently established, we find under a most able master, which ASHBURY is allowed to have been, became all at once a nursery for the English theatres, and it is very probable, after the meridian excellence of BETTERTON, and the distraction into which RICH threw English theatricals, that the stage would have dwindled away for want of actors had not so lucky an occasion presented itself, as that a Master of the Revels, and a man of fortune, should not only consider acting as a laudable, and meritorious employment, but become an actor himself, and induce his wife to follow his example, in order to give a consequence to that profession of which he was the patron and protector.

This very advantageous circumstance, however, happening, men of better fortune and more liberal education, attached themselves to the stage than would have done had the director been merely an adventurer. BOOTH was born of an honourable family in Lancashire, and brought up at Westminster school, and it was with some difficulty he could get

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ing house at Whitehall, by persons of rank. Mr. ASHBURY conducted the whole, and from this circumstance he obtained his situation as Master of the Revels in Ireland.

on the stage by the consent of his connections, and if it had not been for the example of ASHPURY it is more than probable he never would have been an actor. WILKS, whose grandfather was the famous judge of that name, may be described in the same manner, and this being applicable to many of the others, we see a whole play supplied by the very names of men who were serving an apprenticeship under ASHBURY in DUBLIN, and who afterwards came forward as masters in LONDON.

ASHBURY continued patentee of this exclusive theatre till 1720, when he died at the age of eighty-two, and retained his judgement and faculties to the last moment of his life. He had been Master of the Revels to CHARLES the second, WILLIAM the third, queen ANNE, and GEORGE the first, and this, of course, accounts for there having been no other theatre during all that period.

After the death of ASHBURY a relaxation in the duty of Master of the Revels threw the stage into dispute, and different noblemen assumed a right to give licences within their liberties, and extraneous entertainments were introduced by foreigners. A certain Signora VIOLANTE, in 1732, opened a kind of booth which at length grew into a theatre. She

began with posturing\*, went on with prize-fighting, then with pantomiming, and finished with plays. for BARRINGTON, NORRIS, BEAMSLY, Mrs. WORFINGTON, and Mrs. MICHEL, appeared originally among this heterogeneous medley, till at length it was discovered that she had no licence, and some years afterwards her theatre was converted into a Lying-in-Hospital.

During the last two years that Madame VIO-LANTE's theatre continued open, for I believe she

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\* Madame ISABELLA became here a terrible sacrifice to this shocking method of diverting an audience. She was born in Italy, sprung from a noble family in the city of Florence. She was put into a nunnery at twelve years of age, in order to take the veil; but a posture-master unluckily came to that city, gained her affections, and found means to carry her off, and married her, he instructed her in this unseemingly and dangerous employment, and brought her to England, where Lady ISABELLA was greatly admired, for her postures, and feats of activity. The last, and fatal, time of her performance, she was eight months gone with-child; but the covetous husband loved money so well, as it is reported, that he would not allow her the necessary repose required in her condition; so that, in one of her dances on a slack rope, she fell on the stage, where the mother and infant, newly born with the force of the fall, expired in a moment, fatal catastrophe! in her twenty-first year of her age. Thus was the running account of the poor Lady ISABELLA, after her death, whose end was much lamented; for, notwithstanding her disreputable employment, she was esteemed as a woman of strict virtue.

did not reign more than five years in all. It was managed by SPARKS, BARRINGTON, and Miss MACRAE, afterwards Mrs. MITCHEL, for three pounds a week, and it was this lady's benefit which was patronized by the people of fashion that conjured up a spirit of resentment in the old Smock alley managers, which induced an application to the Lord Mayor of DUBLIN, and through which they were suppressed.

My Lord MEATH, however, gave an authority to this same company with an actor of the name of HUSBAND at their head to build in his liberties, and in consequence a theatre very soon opened in Ransford-street, which must have been about the year 1737. It should have been known, however, that Smock alley had three years before that a much more formidable rival. The Duke of DORSET laid the first stone of a theatre in Aungier-street, which opened early in 1734.

Smock alley seems to have gone on with the best regulations, and to have reaped the greatest profit. Aungier-street, and Ransford street opposed each other in various ways, having recourse to spectacle, which seemed to be all upon a par



with the good people of Dublin, for while one house overflowed with *The Coronation of Henry the Eighth* at an immense expence, spectators were as numerously attracted at the other by *The Beggar's Coronation*, which was merely a builelque and brought out at no expence at all.

To these theatres succeeded a house in Capel-street, Punch's theatre, and sometime afterwards a playhouse in Crow-street, but as I am now forward enough to prove how far the Irish theatre assisted the English up to that period I shall not take it up again till I shew in what way we are obliged to it, for QUIN, Mrs. WOFFINGTON, and many other performers who joined the grand army of theatrical heroes under GARRICK.

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## CHAP. XIV.

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MUSIC, THE OPERA, AND OTHER RELATIVE PARTICULARS.

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WE left the subject of music at the time when it was ripe for the improvements of PURCELL, LAWES, and those other admirable composers who followed ORLANDO GIBBONS, and the school in which he studied, and which had imbibed enough of Italian taste to polish the bold and natural character of English melody, without destroying its vernacular effect.

At the Restoration, music, which had struggled like every thing else during the troubles, began to renovate. One of the first measures taken by CHARLES the second was to form the establishment of a choir in the Chapel Royal, and CHILD, GIBBONS, and LOW, were appointed the organists, and COOK was master of the children. The salaries at this time were considerably augmented as an encouragement to the professions, and every other step

was taken to give dignity and consequence to science, that CHARLES indeed had but little to offer, except such music as excited little interest. He knew it would be both gratifying and useful to encourage, and this politic judgment was so correct, that all the choirs in the kingdom constantly felt the good effects of this arrangement.

Music, however, was not confined to the church. It had always been a custom, as we have seen, to entertain companies at private houses with music; but music in parts being now brought to great perfection, concerts were set forward; to no great effect, however, till a man of the name of BRITTON, a most singular instance of natural endowment, who attained to perfection every thing he studied, and who seems to have had a most scientific mind, established, under very forbidding circumstances, a regular concert.

This BRITTON, a small coal-man, in an obscure part of the town, difficult of access, in a room without ornament or accommodation, and more like a prison than a receptacle for decent auditors, attracted all the fashion of the age, who flocked regularly every week to taste a delight of which the English were now so particular fond, that it was considered

as vulgar then not to have attended BRITTON's concert, as it would be now not to have heard BANTI.

This concert continued from 1678 to 1714, during which period at different times it received persons of the highest distinction, and performers of the highest eminence. The movements of music began now to be distinguished, and classed; their wildness and irregularity corrected; the jig, the gavot, and the minuet, ascertained; and every advantage given that was necessary to blend nature and regularity, and such men as BANISTER, and LOCK, who seized the opportunity of giving music that theatrical effect it had benefited by in ITALY, fixed a sort of familiar criterion which won upon every mind, and converted that to magic which had before been only gratification.

I cannot give a stronger proof of this than the music of Macbeth, which was composed by LOCK for D'AVENANT. The English spectator at this moment knows and admits its superiority, and I fancy it will be difficult to point out any thing, as far as it goes, that boasts more sterling excellence. BANISTER had at that time composed *Circe* with some reputation; but, when PURCELL began to at-

tract public attention by the composition of *Dido*, the words of DRYDEN's beautiful epitaph on that great man shews that he repeated no more than the truth for his competitors "sung no more, or only sung " his fame."

LEE's *Theodosius*, DRYDEN's *King Arthur*, BETTERTON's *Prophets*, SHAKESPEAR's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a prodigious number of other dramatic pieces, which PURCELL embellished with his compositions, gave theatrical music so decided a superiority over every thing, even the Italian theatre, for ITALY had not yet been greatly celebrated except for its wonderful church music, and the grandeur of opera style, that this extraordinary and inspired composer most opportunely shone out a musical ÆSCHYLUS.

This will shew, however the Italian school must be for ever considered as the true source for all that is great and dignified in music, that it is only to be resorted to as a kind of education, which corrects ignorance, rubs off the hardneesses of crude conceptions, and gives a polish and a taste, but can never confer genius; and it is upon this principle that every dramatic writer would rather be a SHAKESPEAR than a JONSON, and every dramatic composer

a PURCELL, or an ARNE, than a DONONCINI, or even a HANDEL.

I thought it material to give this strong proof that music, upon fair, meritorious, and natural ground, obtained with great reputation and respectability before the introduction of the Italian opera. The English air has a very peculiar character, which I will venture to say has never been felt, and, therefore, could never have been composed, but by Englishmen, and I appeal to every man of natural taste in the kingdom, even though I involve the great HANDEL in the controversy, whether English words have ever been set, so to affect the heart and the affections, by any foreigner, of whatever description, as by PURCELL, ARNE, and BOYCE.

At the same time it is nothing more than the truth, that native beauty of all descriptions may acquire elegance by the adoption of foreign ornament. PURCELL himself says that music at that time "was learning Italian, which is its best master, "and studying a little of the French air to give it "somewhat more of gaiety and fashion;" none of which is amiss in able hands, but the danger has ever been that mistaken elegance gets fantastic; till, in science, as in dress, taste is vitiated, proportion

deformed, and natural grace distorted into extravagance, and caricature.

I shall now take up the opera at the time that shuttlecock SWINEY was hustled out of his management and obliged to seek shelter in a foreign climate. There was no danger, the Italians having once tasted the sweets of English patronage, that such a market for the sale of their wares should remain unstocked; and, fortunately for them, the very man formed by every left handed requisite to promote their cunning, their art, and their intrigues, became the successor to poor SWINEY.

This man, who has been a good deal celebrated, and exposed with that honest truth and pointed indignation which very meritoriously strong the pen of FIELDING, who had been a kind of a twindling traveller to all the courts in Europe, where he had filched away the drofs of every fantastic taste, and the grossest particles of every fervile species of flattery, was called HEIDDEGER. He came to this country in the year 1708; and, though he enlisted in the Guards for protection from his creditors, he had so much impudence, and so much insinuation, that he got access in the most familiar way to many of the young sprigs of fashion, by whom he was called the Swiss Count.

Nothing could happen so fortunate for him as SWINEY's declining interest in the opera. He instantly laid his eye on being his successor, and began his approaches by degrading every thing that the English had witnessed in the way of opera, and in short keeping to that rule which foreigners invariably lay down of rising upon the ruin of somebody. The Italians were of course glad enough to rally round him, and he collected together VALENTINI, MARGUERITA, and some others to whom, by way of a master stroke, to shew an apparent impartiality, he added an English woman, the celebrated Mrs. TORTS, and thus armed and supplied by the music of BONONCINI, SCARLATTI, STEFFANI, GASPARINI, and ALBINONI, he took the operatical field with such success that he made prisoners of no less than five hundred English guineas in his very first attack.

This was only a *coup d'essai*. The opera was called *Thomyris*, and performed at the Queen's theatre at the Haymarket. It was translated into English, but the Italian singers managed the English words so ill, that it became a custom as before for English singers to sing English, and Italian singers Italian, by which means nothing could be so strange



a jumble as the opera. This is noticed perpetually in the Spectator, and indeed it is impossible for any thing to be so unnatural and disgusting. At length, however, the operas were wholly Italian as they are now performed.

It will be necessary to mention that, during the short time AARON HILL had the management of the opera, which we have seen was in 1709, he invited HANDEL, who at that time began to be in great reputation on the Continent, to bring out an opera at the Haymarket, and this new acquisition was one of COLLIER's motives for breaking off with HILL. HEIDEGGER stood by contemplating these circumstances and watching a proper opportunity to step forward; and, thinking that a conjunction of foreign interests would serve his purpose he brought HANDEL forward as soon as possible with every advantage.

*Rinaldo*, in which there is certainly some beautiful music, was the opera HANDEL had composed for HILL. It had great success, and this gave HEIDEGGER an excellent opportunity of availing himself of, either his German auxiliary, or his Italian allies, as occasion might offer. He preferred Pasticcios from the Italians because they cost nothing;

but he rejoiced at this occasion of checking his mercenaries, as well as gratifying the taste of a people who swallowed every thing foreign with such avidity.

Nothing, however, could exhibit so heterogeneous a medley as the opera. The operas composed by HANDEL, who was a German, were generally written in English and translated into Italian. The Pasticcios were partly English and partly Italian, sung by English and Italian singers, and the whole was regulated by a Swiss manager. The consequence of all this was perpetual disputes and appeals to the public; and, so early as 1711, CLAYTON, HARM, and DIEUPART, found their situations intolerable, and solicited subscriptions for private concerts.

There can be no doubt but that the strictures in the Spectator were of infinite use in the regulation of the Opera. ADDISON laughs very successfully at the innovations on common sense that rendered this spectacle more incongruous, for which there was no necessity, than it was in its nature obliged to be. The singing birds, in *Rinaldo*, is a happy opportunity for ridicule. The knocking down a part of the wall to make way for the en-

trance of a hundred horsemen, the introduction of the New River for a cascade, and the fireworks which this water is to extinguish if any accident should happen, are admirable strokes of irony, which however, he concludes by advising the proprietor to ensure his house previous to the performance. But says he, "It is no wonder that "scenes should be very surprizing which were contrived by two poets of different nations, and "raised by two magicians of different sexes," to which he might have added that the characters were performed by beings of no sex at all.

The happy hit concerning translating and retranslating, by which means the word pity, in the original, comes in place of rage in the copy, and therefore, destroys the effect of the music, is also true satire, and the restless disposition of the English, who having heard opera, wholly English, sung unintelligibly by the Italians, afterwards half English, half Italian and at length, to settle the matter, who were content to hear it in a language they did not understand, is again a fair hit, and it cannot be denied that ADDISON deserves the thanks of posterity for these and other sensible remarks, calculated to explode the use of every thing incongruous and heterogeneous, for the practice of the present day,

shews us that he not only wrote a severe and merited critique on the monsters of 1711, but anticipated at least as severe and as merited a critique on those of 1799.

Decency, propriety, and a respect, and reverence, for manners, and decorum, however, made the boundary upon this subject to ADDISON'S judgment. His opinions concerning music, one of which is that it will admit of nothing but nonsense, probably because *Rosmond* did not succeed, are without exception erroneous. and HAWKINS is perfectly right in bringing forward, as a proof of this, his preference of French music to Italian. We have seen how differently PURCELL made the distinction. The Pope is said to have laughed most heartily at this ridicule of the Italian opera in ENGLAND, which was sensible enough. No doubt the latter part of the critique turned the laugh from the derided, to the derider.

Operas continued to be carried on by HEIDEGGER with various success, till the reign of GEORGE the second, when that high priest in the temple of voluptuousness introduced a species of amusement which the court of CHARLES the second, with all its profligacy, was a stranger to. I shall easily be understood to mean *malquerades*. At these

the king, and the countess of YARMOUTH, were highly delighted, and their projector was so greatly encouraged being now Master of the Revels. which, if it be true, must have been apart from the office of Lord Chamberlain, a circumstance hardly reconcilable, though I cannot refuse to insert it because I find it confirmed by every account of this extraordinary man—and his fortune so augmented; that being asked what European had the greatest ingenuity, he himself answered a Swiss, for that he was of SWITZERLAND, came to ENGLAND without a farthing, and had there found means to get five thousand a year and spend it, which no English man ever did or could do in SWITZERLAND\*.

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\* HEIDEGGER seems to have been a kind of jester, not only to the king but to every body else, as the following circumstance will prove. "He was the first to joke upon his own ugliness, and he once laid a wager with the earl of CHESTERFIELD, that within a certain given time, his lordship would not be able to produce so hedious a face in all London. After strict search, a woman was found, whose features were at first sight thought stronger than HEIDEGGER's; but, upon clapping her head-dress upon himself, he was universally allowed to have won the wager." JOLLY, a well known taylor, carrying his bill to a noble duke; his grace, for evasion, said, "Damn your ugly face, I never will pay you till you bring me an uglier fellow than yourself!" JOLLY bowed and retired, wrote a letter, and sent it by a servant to HEIDEGGER, saying "his grace wished to see him the next morning on particular business." HEIDEGGER attended, and JOLLY was there to meet him.

The history of the opera began now to consist of so many, and such inextricable particulars, that it is impossible to enumerate them here. HEIDEGGER,

and in consequence, as soon as HEIDEGGER's visit was over, JOLLY received the cash.

Another thing is told of him still more whimsical. "The facetious duke of MONTAGUE, projector of the Bottle Conjuring business, procured a mask to be taken of HEIDEGGER, and a similar diels to that which he was to wear at a masquerade, and when this master of the ceremonies had retired, after ordering the band to play God save the King, upon his majesty's arrival at the rooms, he caused his representative to order them to play Over the Water to Charley. The company were thunderstruck, and HEIDEGGER ran to set the matter to rights, swearing that the band were drunk or mad, and ordered them most petemptonly to recommence God save the King. The moment his back was turned the false HEIDEGGER commanded Over the Water to Charley again. This went on to the delight of the king and his courtiers, till after the band had been kicked out of the orchestra, and their commanding officer distracted at this strange appearance of duplicity of which he was not guilty, the countenit stepped forward and assured the king that he was the true HEIDEGGER, and that the other was only the Devil in his likeness. The two Socias were now fairly confronted, and, after enumerating their different pretensions to the honour of being respectively the Swiss Count, the real having the disadvantage of the false in the pretended opinion of those judges to whom they made their appeal, The duke of MONTAGUE in pity to the poor devil, who was now stark mad with disappointment and vexation, made the imposter unmask and the joke was laughed off, not, however, till HEIDEGGER had obtained a promise that the mask should be melted down before his face that there be no further chance of being mistaken for the devil.

during the time he presided as manager, which was till the year 1730, acted like another CIBBER, but was under a necessity of putting on a great deal more of the Machiaval. CIBBER had only English actors and actresses to manage, HEIDDEGGER had composers living and dead, and of all countries to reconcile as well as the interests of English and Italian singers, instrumental performers and dancers, with all the operatical schisms branching from the caprice and folly of their different supporters.

The profession of an opera singer was now become a matter of the greatest importance, and the caresses and lavish bounty of princes had made persons of this description insufferably insolent. One lady, Mrs. ROBINSON, had married lord PETERBOROUGH, and others had patrons and protectors out of number; but this was not all. There was scarcely a person of quality, of either sex, that did not appear to be fascinated with opera singing, and to take instructions from the different performers, every one of whom had thus a separate partizan. By this means no single passion or affection could be fashionably uttered, or subject discussed, without some quoted exclamation in bad Italian. The various disputes about CUZZONI and FAUSTINA may serve as one example of that scandalous height

to which the insolence of opera singers was arrived, but which, nevertheless, did not reach its climax till FARINELLI.

CUZZONI had continued in exclusive possession of the opera and the public, as first singer, without a rival till FAUSTINA made her appearance. She governed so completely without control, and commanded managers, composers, and singers, with so high a hand that HANDEL, who of course had difficulty enough to brook such imperious conduct, threatened one day to throw her out of the window. She carried the matter too far in provoking the German, for he instantly put engines to work to set her up a rival, and FAUSTINA at length appeared to be a most formidable one.

No public character should ever count too long upon popularity, especially when the expectation is built upon no better basis than caprice, and fashionable taste, which vary as often and as unaccountably in matters of amusement, as in dress. No sooner did FAUSTINA appear, who for one thing was handfomer than her rival, than she had her supporters, for these people are always cunning enough to bargain for patronage before they budge a step from home.



HANDEL in this measure very sensibly hoped to beget in these fingers a spirit of emulation, and render their different abilities the means of serving very laudably the purpose of the general operatical interest. CUZZONI had a fine voice, and was complete mistress of the pathos; she sung naturally, appealed to the feelings, and touched the heart. FAUSTINA had great powers of execution, she sung quick passages with wonderful facility, and ran divisions to astonishment. In short one pleased, the other surprised; one created delight, the other wonder.

HANDEL instantly set about composing songs suitable to their difficult styles of singing; and, thus while CUZZONI melted the audience into tears in *Affanni del Pensier*, in *Otho*, FAUSTINA surprised them into wonder in *Alla sua Gabbia D'oro*, in *Alexander*, in which song she is said to have imitated very naturally the warbling of the nightingale. This competition, however, did all HANDEL had hoped, but unfortunately at length it did a great deal more than he hoped, for it became as much a party business as a contested election, nay more; for the politics, in the regions of taste, are always supported with greater vehemence than the politics of the state.

Epigrams, lampoons, and a hundred other squibs, written by hungry poets, who by this means got a

dinner which was the only good the dispute occasioned, swarmed about the town. Lady PEMBROKE at head of her party, in favour of CUZZONI, took the field in person against lady BURLINGTON, who commanded a host in behalf of FAUSTINA; till after riots, libels, duels, and a long *et cætera* of natural consequences, poor CUZZONI was obliged to yield the palm to her more formidable rival, who, being younger and handsomer, had all the men on her side.

The managers, considering the matter adjudged by the fiat of the public, thought to give an extraordinary proof of their impartiality by seeming at the same time to acknowledge the superiority of FAUSTINA, and yet do justice to the great merits of CUZZONI. The time, therefore, being come for the renewal of articles, they made a promise to FAUSTINA that whatever might be the new bargain, she should receive a guinea a year more than her rival.

This was considered as such a flagrant act of injustice by the supporters of CUZZONI, and in particular by lady PEMBROKE, that they made her swear upon the Evangelists never to receive less than FAUSTINA, and the managers, who began to be tired of the dispute, and in particular HANDEL, to whom she must have been a torment, determined to shew that

they regarded their word as sacredly as she her oath, fairly let her go to the Continent remunerated by her noble protectors. But to shew how worthily bounty of this kind is generally bestowed, she was gulled abroad by a crafty Italian, and came back to ENGLAND in 1748, when being old and having lost her voice her former benefactors did not chuse to know her, but on the contrary insinuated that it was wicked in her to break her oath, which, however, she did and performed in MITHRIDATE; till, finding it would not do, she once more returned to ITALY, where she died in indigence.

FAUSTINA was more fortunate. She took care of a good fortune which she had acquired in ENGLAND, and afterwards was married to HASSE the famous composer, at DRESDEN, and was twenty years ago living very much respected at VIENNA. It is impossible to pass over this article without giving some circumstances relative to FARINELLI, with which, and a brief account of opera composers, and singers, I shall close the fourth volume of this work.

The arrival of FARINELLI, who came over to ENGLAND with PORPORA the composer, and AMICONTI the painter, was announced with as much parade as if he had come embassador to settle the most important interests of the nation. He was gazed at as a

prodigy, introduced to the king, accompanied on the harpsichord in his *coup d'essai* by the Princess of Orange, invited to companies of the first distinction, and happy were they who could blunder out a compliment in Italian to this wonderful being, or receive from him the great condescension of a supercilious answer.

SENESINO was in possession of the stage, like CUZZINO, before FAUSTINA, when this phenomenon came to eclipse him. SENESINO's merit was also simplicity and pathos, and FARINELLI's execution, which he is said to have carried to a most astonishing excess. We are told that he had an octave more in his voice than any other singer ever possessed, and that the most extensive woman's voice ever known had no such compass in alt. Poor SENESINO, with all his sweetness of tone, which he is allowed to have had in a superior degree to FARINELLI, was of course thrown into the back ground.

The presents he received were innumerable; he was idolized by the women of fashion to adoration. One lady exclaimed from the boxes, "One God, one FARINELLI!" This infatuation was so excessive, so effeminate, and so disgraceful, that not only several manly writers of our own country, but foreigners, reprobated in terms of astonishment and

disdain such a departure from the hardy, honest, and honourable character for which Britons had ever been so gloriously distinguished, and the obloquy and contempt into which they would inevitably plunge themselves by emulating the taste and folly of a nation long since sunk into voluptuousness and imbecility.

The misfortune was that during all this time nobody knew why this lavish applause, and more lavish bounty, for FARINELLI received more than five thousand a year, was bestowed. Not one in fifty was capable of giving a reason why he sung better than SENESINO, and, as to his deportment, it was disgusting beyond measure, his figure being as tall as a giant, and as thin as a shadow, therefore, if he had grace it could be only of a sort to be envied by a penguin, or a spider.

But let us turn from this monument of English folly to examine the rest of the operatical corps; who, though in some measure their encouragement was reproachable enough, did not so abjectly disgrace us, in particular the composers, for their labours were meritorious, and worthy of the countenance they received.

The contention at this time lay between the Ita-

lians, the Germans, and the English. The Italian music upon the whole had the preference for a time, and probably would have established a correcter taste, had not HANDEL, with all his merit, kept up that coldness and phlegm that was but too apparent in the style of our professors. It gave a spirit of emulation to succeed in abstruse harmony and studied modulation, and if PURCELL had been obliged to restrain his genius, before HANDEL, how much more must it have been necessary for such composers as GREEN, TRAVERS, GATES, and others, many of whom, unable to contest the point with foreigners, pursued a more profitable though a less reputable course; and, as they could not get their own music a reception, taught that of others which was more to the public taste.

The Italians, however, did not so tacitly acquiesce in yielding the superiority to HANDEL, and BONONCINI in particular set himself forward in as pointed a contest with that composer, as that of CUZZONI and FAUSTINA\*. HANDEL, however, carried his point triumphantly, and thus, with all the

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\* SWIFT's whimsical note of Tweedledum and Tweedledee was written upon this occasion, at which a living author, as small as his manners as he is elegant in his writings, has, I think a little too indistinctly taking umbrage. I don't know how far SWIFT has a feel for music, but it is plain he does not in this case ridicule the merit of the men but the folly of the public.

solid and substantial merit of the various pieces brought out by this celebrated composer, the opera was certainly not of that species best calculated to command the admiration of this country, till the more splendid and general beauties in the melodies of JOMELLI, PERGOLESI, and GALLUPPI, cleared away that buzz of harmonic combination that had so long perplexed, but not satisfied, the English ear.

As to the performers. I have shewn they were partly English and partly Italians. This mixture, indeed, had been always customary. Mrs. ARABELLA HUNT had been in PURCELL's time as celebrated as was afterwards Mrs. TOFTS, and after her Mrs. ROBINSON, MARGUERITA, ISABELLA, GIRARDEAU, the BARONESS, GALLIA, and then FAUSTINA, CUZZONI, and others were the female singers; as to the men, VALENTINI kept the stage till he was driven out by SENESINO, who afterwards gave way to FARINELLI, even as one wedge driveth out another, as ADDISON makes Vellum say in the *Drummer*. The opera, however, was now, like every thing else dramatic, drawing to the zenith of its reputation, having acquired a splendour and a consequence soon after the first appearance of GARRICK.

